

# YOUNG INDIANA JONES AND THE LOST VIAL OF DR. CURIE

STORY & ORIGINAL FRENCH TEXT

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ENGLISH TRANSLATION & ADDITIONAL JONES LORE

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# Young Indiana Jones and The Lost Vial of Dr. Curie

(Indiana Jones Jr. et L'Ampoule Radioactive)

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## Chapter 1:

### A Crummy Lunch!

*Paris, November 1912*

“You’re not eating, Junior?”

“You know I hate being called Junior. It’s ridiculous to call any 13 year old with my experience Junior!”

Professor Henry Jones smiled, completely ignored his son’s complaint and moved the conversation along. “Tripe à la mode de Caen is famous, you are going to let yours go cold in front of you son?”

“Grrrr,” grumbled Indiana, stopping himself from saying “gross” and keeping his lips sealed. Grimacing behind the forest of wine glasses separating him from his father. Tripe! Indiana could never get used to eating intestine. Yuck! It was disgusting. As much as brains, frog legs, or snails. And why not slugs while they were at it? No, decidedly, the young adventurer would never like this French cuisine that his father seemed to appreciate endlessly. He wondered if his father had ever seen a vulture pull out a dead horse’s intestine while tied up, as Indy had just weeks earlier. The months since his mother’s death had seen changes in his father and some absolutely wild adventures.

“What’s wrong, Junior? Thinking I am missing your performance?” asked the professor before bringing his glass filled with a purple-colored wine to his lips. “People think mimes are French in origin, although it was made famous here it came from Italy

in the 15th century.” With slightly reddened cheeks, hair in disarray, Henry Jones sipped a mouthful, half-closing his eyelids. “Only mentioning mimes because your silent staging of a boy pretending to eat tripe might get you a tryout at some reputable companies”. A copy of the book *Eskimo Life* by the explorer Fridtjof Nansen lay on the table.

Meanwhile, Indy stared at his glass full of flavorless water. Ah! the sparkling sodas he drank back home in the United States. He felt like there was a new flavor in each downtown they stopped in when visiting various libraries. These French did not understand cuisine and technology like the people of New Jersey, Indy’s 13 year old mind was certain. With the thought Indy inadvertently produced another rumbling sigh, again with lips sealed. He was proud of his self control with that part.

“What are you saying, Junior?”

“What am I saying? With words? Nothing!”

“Half the restaurant has heard the grumbling, Junior”

“As far as I know only bears grumble, although they are attracted to trash so maybe there’s one outside?” Indy questioned in an overly-earnest tone. The lips-sealed period was over though. Under his breath Indy muttered “He can call me a bear but can’t call me Indiana, perfect.”

While the Professor Jones ignored earlier grouching, the mumbling did get a response. “That’s right, in honor of your poor-dog-died-to-save-your-life, I know. Well, Mister In-dia-na Jones, can you

explain to me why you haven't touched anything on your plate? I can tell you that your thought-dead namesake would devour all of this in a heartbeat."

Indy's teeth and fists clenched at his Father's mention of the dog. He knew his father was trying to goad him into getting into more trouble. About six months earlier his dog had been bitten by a rattlesnake and assumed deceased. Indy had spent an entire adventure across Turkey in mourning just to come home to his dog waiting on the porch looking a bit rough but alive.

His father's 'joke' and thoughts of being apart from the dog punched Indy in the gut. Indy knew he needed to get away from his dad for a bit, and was going to take a couple return jabs on his way out.

"Certainly father, it is the most delicious intestine I have ever enjoyed. Americans are culturally lacking. Why stop at that point in the digestive tract? Imagine a desert colon stuffed with chocolate custard! I think I will write a few letters home petitioning my favorite restaurants." People in nearby tables heard. Indy pretended he wanted to continue but couldn't. "Unfortunately right now I feel tired from the trip". He coughed neatly into his napkin. "A slight sore throat."

Far from being distressed by news of the questionable illness, it was clear the wine had sapped any and all energies involving his son's theatrics. The generous portions of wine had most likely encouraged Professor Jones' joke about the family dog, it also had made him temporarily forget his



son had lost his mother on March third and then survived the Titanic disaster weeks later. Jones was so distraught he did not release the death announcement until May, meaning his son was showered with condolences for his mother a second time just about when people stopped asking him about watching all the people die in the North Atlantic. The year 1912 had been rough on the Jones family.

“You’ve caught a cold. Of course, you walked all afternoon without a raincoat, just with that worn-out hat perched on top of your head! As if it would protect you from germs and all dangers! My poor Junior, you’re like the Gauls, who never took off their helmets for fear that the sky would fall on their heads!” This remark, his father had made it to him a hundred times since their arrival in France. His father’s first few renditions of the joke came after he got the hat as a booby prize in his attempt at the Cross of Coronado. His father was also too tired to argue if his hat was really a Weston, but did appreciate the symbolism of a hat that was in between the boy’s east coast roots and the cowboy fashion of their new home.

Twisting the handle of the belt knife Indy felt compelled to wear at lunch, he glanced up at the sky. His gaze met the clock face at the moment the hands seemed to stop: 1:15 PM. Indy had to remember time was still passing. It had been over an hour since they had sat down in the restaurant of the Hôtel du Cherche-Midi where they were staying. It might as well have been an eternity. He carefully observed the

hunting scenes depicted on large paintings, taking time to think about what was depicted in each one. He thought about the chandeliers hanging with infinite numbers of glass beads, the finely carved mirrors, and the other diners at their tables.

About two months earlier Indy had seen his horse shot at close range by a pair of murderous bank robbers and had to watch the horse be devoured by vultures from mere feet away while tied to a tree. He was pretty sure time was moving more slowly now. When would he be able to get up from the table to end this current torture and stretch his legs? A man passed by. He wore a top hat beyond what Indy had seen in the United States. Wear something like that in Princeton and you would be tired of people commenting on it by the end of day one. The guy had a real stovepipe hat perched on his head, wasn't that more ridiculous than his own Weston? He was going to mention it to his father. How did that make it past the restaurant's etiquette police?

A waiter interrupted his thoughts: "Did you enjoy your meal, gentlemen? May I clear the table?"

"Please do," Henry Jones replied, putting on his best French accent.

With his black suit and long white apron tied from waist to feet, with his stiff collar adorned with a magnificent black bow tie that forced him to keep his neck stiff, the waiter resembled a man in a penguin costume more than a waiter. Barely older than Indy, he had a friendly face and a mischievous look. As he was clearing the table Indy noticed his

hands seemed harder and more rough than seemed appropriate for his age and especially in comparison to the other waiters.

“I see that the young gentleman hasn’t eaten anything! He’s probably saving himself for dessert,” he continued, winking knowingly at Indy. The boy, pretending not to understand, let his father respond on his behalf. He was definitely in a bad mood and the waiter’s kindness was having an opposite effect. It started as soon as they arrived at the restaurant.

Firstly, he had to hand over his beloved Weston to an employee who had grabbed it with the tip of his white gloves and carried it away with a disgusted look. Then they had to wait for the head waiter’s whim to sit down. They couldn’t even choose their table! The Italian guy outside had a monkey, did the guy even care if I wanted a window seat where I could see it? Finally, there was no way to pour a drink without the waiter rushing over to take the carafe out of your hands. As if it was impossible to serve yourself! And the other diners? Pathetic. It felt like being in a senior citizens’ club on a slow day! No, this latest trip to Paris was off to a bad start and was looking like to be his least favorite. Tough to meet the standard of the last trip though.

If meeting Picasso and Degas weren’t enough, he knew he’d be friends with Norman for a lifetime. Last correspondence from his new friend mentioned he got his first book illustration job and is going to be doing drawings for Boys Life magazine. Any Boy Scout like Indy knew that was about as cool of an illustration job as possible. Even though Indy’s



Dad's books were found around the globe, the idea that his friend Norman Rockwell's work would be in Boys Life was a thrill. Indy wondered if his friend's name would ever be as famous as Picasso and Degas. Indy inadvertently was tapping his foot wildly thinking of the idea.

"Stop stomping your foot like a goat! I'm so tired!" the professor exclaimed abruptly. "And stop grumbling, you're going to spoil my appetite. For once we spend a week together, you could make an effort!" Indy couldn't help but smile mockingly. He couldn't decide if it was better to be called a bear or a goat. He did know something his father hated to be called though.

"Very well, Grand Chef." The professor's face flushed. Indy referred to some uncomfortable questions on the train trip about his father's inability to cook anything. The metaphors surrounding people who can't prepare their own food are not flattering. Professor Jones' jaw clenched tightly and his eyes seemed to bulge out of their sockets. Indy thought it was fortunate the golden-rimmed glasses were there to hold them in place.

"This is my last request about your tone, Junior! I am your father. You so often seem to forget that!" Such displays of authority were rare. But when they erupted it was best not to insist. Just at that moment the young waiter arrived, pushing a small wheeled table topped with a large metal bell. At the sight of it, the professor's anger instantly faded away.

"What fresh hell is this?" wondered Indiana as he observed his father, whose eyes and face danced

with pleasure. He laughed knowing if he said that out loud he'd go back to Utah in a steamer trunk.

The waiter lifted the bell. A cheese platter appeared, accompanied by its aroma. "Look, Junior! A culinary masterpiece!! Nowhere else but in France is there such a variety of cheeses! Smell this!"

Indy suppressed a gag. It smelled alright. And quite strong, on top of that! Henry Jones took several kinds of cheeses. One was oozing. Another looked moldy. The third, covered in herbs, seemed to have rolled in loose ground. Then it was Indy's turn.

"What would the young gentleman like?" With a sidelong glance, Indy observed his father.

After some hesitation, he replied in French: "Ice cream. Good vanilla ice cream."

"Come on, Indy!" exclaimed Henry Jones. He would have infinitely preferred Henry jr. join him on the gastronomy lesson where the professor compared dairy in cheese production to marble in greek sculpture. Fortunately, the young waiter came to the boy's rescue.

"Of course. I'll bring it right away," he said before walking away, pushing his cheese platter. Perplexed but pleased to see that his son was trying to speak French, Professor Jones began to enjoy his camembert. He also asked his son if he noticed anything about the waiter's accent.

Between bites, he began to outline the itinerary for their stay in Paris: "This afternoon, we will visit the Roman baths of Cluny and the arenas of Lutetia. You may not know, son, but Lutetia is the ancient name of Paris. 2,000 years ago, the capital was just a

village on an island in the Seine. Celts inhabited it, a fishing people called the Parisii.”

“Excuse me sirs. Your ice cream.” The waiter delicately placed a magnificent multicolored bowl, topped with a mountain of whipped cream.

“Wow! It’s beautiful!” exclaimed Indy. “And darn good,” he added a few seconds after tasting it.

“Congratulations on your mundane palette! But where was I? Ah yes: after the invasion of Gaul by the Romans, Lutetia became Gallo-Roman. It is from those times that the baths and the arenas date. Later, the city suffered many invasions...” the professor listed a few and closed with “most famously the invasion of the Huns. Before you ask, yes. Lead by Attila the Hun.”

“Attila?” interrupted Indy, who had already devoured half of his ice cream. “That cruel barbarian who burned everything in his path and ate raw flesh tenderized under his horse’s saddle?”

“That’s what they say,” chuckled the amused professor. “But it’s more of a legend.”

“Ah well!” exclaimed Indy, licking remnants of whipped cream from the edge of his bowl. Impressive portions of his ice cream were already just a memory. He signaled the waiter for a refill.

“Indy! Come on, have you no shame? Another serving of that scale be both gluttony and greed. Two deadly sins in one dessert.” While the professor continued to admonish his son, his son’s attention drifted to a young woman wearing a large ribboned sun hat and a loose, airy fabric dress. As she entered the room Indy couldn’t help but observe her. She

had the elegance of one of those artists he had seen on posters all along the way from the station to the hotel. A walking piece of art nouveau. In a suddenly louder tone Professor Jones abruptly asked his son “Are you listening to me or daydreaming?”

“What? Sorry?” stammered Indy, blushing. He was so distracted he couldn’t think of anything.

“That’s what I thought, I’m talking to you and the walls are the ones listening. I was saying that tomorrow afternoon, we have an appointment with my old friend Professor Cassegraine.” Seeing his son’s expression, the professor insisted, “I really want you to come along, Junior!”

“But when will I get to go up the Eiffel Tower?”

“Junior, really, you disappoint me! That hideous pile of iron holds no interest whatsoever. It would be much more enriching for you to visit the Museum of Natural History or the Botanical Garden, don’t you think?” Stubborn, Indy didn’t give in.

“But, Dad, from the first floor of the Tower, you can see all of Paris. It’s truly fabulous!”

“The view from the roof of most of the major department stores is comparable and will have fewer gawking tourists. You want to see art in Paris, not engineering, I think the tower is a waste of time.” Indy wanted to retort that spending over an hour at the table was also a waste of time. Yet, he refrained. His father was now sipping coffee. The other customers were starting to leave. Indy, feeling

restless, also wished to leave this torture table.

“Junior, since you’re so restless, would you please go fetch the map of Paris for me? It’s in my room, on the nightstand.” Indy welcomed this opportunity to get up with enthusiasm.

“I’m on it, back in a flash.” And off he went at full speed. He zigzagged between a stout lady in a fur coat and a little man in a bowler hat, nearly knocking over a bent old gentleman in a green jacket. That’s when the least surprising thing happened. Indy reached the restaurant door and came face to face with the young waiter. He was carrying a tray balanced on one hand. They both tried to avoid each other. But it was too late.

There were shouts. What sounded like “Tabernack!” Then sounds of breaking glass. Then a heavy silence. At his table, Professor Jones had closed his eyes. When he reopened them, his son was sitting on the floor; the waiter to his right, in the same position; and the floor littered with broken glass. Indy began to stammer apologies. Already the waiter was getting up.

“Are you alright? Nothing broken?” he asked. And quite amiably, he offered his hand to help him up. Another waiter had rushed over with a broom. He was sweeping up the pieces.

“Sorry, really sorry,” Indy repeated, embarrassed.

“It’s nothing,” replied the teenager. “It’s also my fault. I wasn’t looking ahead.”

“No, no, it’s my fault,” insisted Indy, whose gaze met his father’s disapproving one.

“Excuse me,” the young waiter was far more friendly than the situation required, “I have work to do. But if you need anything during your stay, don’t hesitate to ask. My name is Charles, Charles Landry.”

With that, he walked away. Not daring to look in his father’s direction, Indy promptly slipped away to the upper floors. Five minutes later, he descended with the map of Paris, determined this time to go unnoticed. He didn’t want to be the subject of the usual mix of ridicule and scrutiny again. As he entered the restaurant, he instantly knew he would not be the center of attention. There was an indescribable frenzy. And where was all this commotion coming from? His father’s table! It was besieged, surrounded by customers and servers. From the midst of the chaos, a voice rose: “Let me go! Let me go!” It sounded like someone was fighting. Henry Jones? No, impossible! The illustrious, very serious professor wasn’t one to make a scene. In haste, Indy squeezed between two waiters, pushed aside two men in suits, and tiptoed to look over the shoulders of the front row. In the center of the crowd, a chubby, bearded little man was gesturing. All red-faced and sweating, he was trying to escape from two waiters who had vainly tried to stop him from entering. While waving his cane, he shouted: “Let go of me, you ruffians. I want to speak to Mr. Professor Henry Jones, the famous historian!”

“Who is this peculiar character? What does he



want?” Indy wondered. Judging by the professor’s disgruntled expression, the man was unknown to him. Yet he persisted.

“Professor Jones, I visited all the hotels in Paris one-by-one to find you. Please listen to me, I have some very important information to share with you.” The commotion had lasted long enough. To put an end to it Henry Jones agreed to listen to the man. He stood up, parted the staff futilely trying to keep them apart and headed towards the smoking room. Content to be escorted by two servers on both sides, the bearded man followed with his head held high between two rows of tables relieved to see his temper tantrum disappear. Indy had stealthily retrieved his precious hat from the check as the hostess was distracted by the noise. He likewise slipped into the smoking room behind the man and his entourage.

Hardly had they settled into the comfortable leather armchairs when the excited little man began to spout a stream of words: “Professor Jones, it’s a great honor for me. I thank you for agreeing to see me. I learned of your arrival in Paris from *Le Petit Journal* and I thought to myself this is the chance of a lifetime to meet you. I scoured all of Paris. Here I am.” The man had only been seated for ten seconds. Belly protruding, a shirttail sticking out of his pants, he paced the room, tapping his cane on the floor. Indy struggled to suppress a laugh while his father grew impatient.

“Sir, will you finally tell me who you are and

what this is about?” he pleaded. “I’m on vacation with my son. Time is precious to us.”

“Where was my head?” the man exclaimed, tapping it as if to make sure he hadn’t lost it. “I haven’t introduced myself: Triphon Héricard, president of the Club of Amateur Archaeologists of Bégon-les-Gonesses. I am truly honored to speak to the famous professor...”

“Get to the point,” Henry Jones cut in sharply. “Again. What brings you here?” “Have you perhaps discovered the tomb of a pharaoh in the Parisian underground?” The irony of his words wasn’t lost on Indy. Nor on Héricard. The stout little man stiffened. Then, swallowing hard, he stammered,

“Well, uh... the fact is that I need your... your opinion.”

“My opinion?”

“Please sir, do not ask a specialist’s opinion unless the matter is serious and the concepts withstand intellectual and academic scrutiny.”

“Of the utmost seriousness, indeed,” replied Triphon Héricard, who had regained his composure. And he continued, “You know, I suppose, that the underground of Paris is pierced with numerous tunnels, passageways and chambers.”

“Of course,” agreed the professor. “Many of the buildings in the capital are largely constructed with limestone extracted from these underground quarries.”

“That’s right,” Héricard agreed. “So, the city rests on a veritable Swiss cheese. Salt water melts

limestone as well.” Indy recalled the cheese platter that smelled so bad earlier. Perhaps the underground tunnels held such a stench? But that surely wasn’t the purpose of Triphon Héricard’s visit.

“Sir,” retorted Professor Henry Jones, consulting his pocket watch, “I only have ten minutes left to spare for you.” At this warning, the gesticulating man, like an armadillo on its back, collapsed into a chair. He took a deep breath, then almost without pausing for breath, he launched into his spiel.

“Three weeks ago, we discovered an underground chamber previously unknown. I believe it to be a Christian crypt. What do you think?”

“Good sir,” Henry Jones began as he stood up. “With full respect to your work, your discovery is surely very interesting. As I mentioned, I’m on vacation with my son and Christians in Europe is not exactly revolutionary...”

“Professor Jones, please, I beg you.” the man interrupted abruptly, and then paused a little too long to show he was thinking about what he could say. “There are details you should see and best not described. You are an expert and I absolutely need your opinion. Without you, I could never obtain the necessary funding to continue the excavations.”

The professor pondered for a moment.

Then, in a calm tone, he replied: “You’ll understand that I can’t pronounce judgment without seeing the site. But, if I trust the articles of my Parisian colleagues published in scientific journals,



your hypothesis is certainly not valid. Christians would be dominant enough in the time period to not need to worship in any tunnel system.”

This response had the same effect as a match on a firecracker.

All red and swollen with anger, the little man exploded: “How is that? Pure lies! I protest!” He stomped his feet like a thwarted child. Amused, Indy daydreamed. He could already see himself with a lamp in hand, exploring the underground galleries, discovering unknown rooms, and who knows? Perhaps treasures...

“Dad,” Indy pleaded with his father. “What if Mr. Héricard is right?” The two men turned to Indy.

A smile had returned to Héricard’s lips, but the professor’s dark look spoke volumes about what he thought of his son’s intervention.

“Dad, please, to make me happy, let’s go see.” Resigned, Henry Jones agreed to go.

“Well, alright, Mr. Triphon Héricard, you’ve won. But don’t thank me, it’s thanks to my son!”

An appointment was made for the next morning. Before leaving, Triphon Héricard, very pleased, shook Indiana’s hand for a long time. To the point that Indy thought he was going to tear it off. What an eccentric fellow, indeed. Both unpleasant and amusing. What was there to think of him? Indy wasn’t sure. In any case, thanks to this singular character, their stay in Paris promised to be a bit more exciting. Internally, the boy rejoiced. He had no idea what adventures the underground of Paris held in store for him.





## Chapter 2:

### Mustaches and Yellow Shoes

The next morning Indy was startled awake by his father who appeared in the doorway.

“Hurry, hurry, Junior. It’s already 9:30. Get dressed quickly. I’ll wait for you downstairs.” The appointment with Triphon Héricard was set for 10 o’clock in front of the entrance to the quarries. However, this entrance was pretty far to the south in Paris. He’d have to cross an area known as the 14th arrondissement, a district of Paris. By his calculation about an hour away from their hotel. No need to be a math whiz to deduce that they would be late.

The boy literally jumped into his pants and leather boots. Quickly, he threw his canvas jacket over his checkered shirt without buttoning it up completely. He would do that later. He didn’t forget to put on his precious hat. Without it, he felt as naked as a worm. Automatically, he wrapped his whip around his belt. What could he possibly use it for on the streets of Paris? Probably nothing. But he liked having it close at hand. He had already experienced so many unexpected adventures. After wiping his face with a towel, he went to join his father in the room where breakfast was served. At the table, where he was finishing his coffee, Professor Jones was getting impatient.

Checking his watch, he greeted his son with a terse and cold “Finally!” With no time to have breakfast, Indiana gulped down a glass of orange juice in one go. He slipped a croissant into his

pocket, there never seemed to be enough to them. He thought of a theoretical Jules Verne story called *Infinite Croissants*. Then Indy began to eat another nicked from a nearby bussers table while following his father, who was already striding through the hotel lobby. Five minutes later, they had reached the entrance to the subway. Luckily, the train arrived just as they reached the platform. At that hour, the passengers were few. So, they easily found seats in a second-class car.

A whistle blew, and the metro started up with a creaking of its wooden and metal mass. "Because of you, we're late. I would have thought this was a waste of time if it ended five minutes before it began," complained Henry Jones. "And to think that it's for your sake that I agreed to this pointless visit!"

"Thanks a million for the sacrifice, Professor," Indy quipped with a smirk.

"Junior! That's enough! I've had it with your sarcasm," Henry Jones flared up. And without another word, he immersed himself in the newspaper he had brought with him. Indy then started to whistle while observing the passengers in the carriage. Across from them, a young girl in a hat stared at the tips of her boots. On the seat next to her, a large woman all in black, with a stern expression, watched her like a bodyguard.

"Strange," thought Indy, "are young French women not free to come and go as they please?" But he couldn't figure it out because the two women got off at the next station. At the same moment, a soldier boarded. He wore a strange spiked helmet

and leather boots that gleamed from being polished. A saber hung at his side.

Upon seeing this German officer, Professor Jones folded his newspaper, turned to Indy, and said in a low voice, "I just read a very troubling article. Tension is rising in Europe. War is raging in the Balkans. In France, military service has been extended to three years. Everywhere there's an arms race. I fear that a conflict may eventually erupt."

This reflection left Indy pensive. He loved adventure but hated war. Unfortunately, men only seemed to think too quickly about killing each other. The last few months had made him certain anything could happen.

Two stations passed before they reached their destination. There, they still had to take a public transport vehicle to go beyond the fortifications. After ten minutes of waiting under a rickety shelter the vehicle still hadn't arrived. "Parisian transportation is just too slow. We should have taken a taxi!" groused Henry Jones sr., nervously fiddling with his newspaper.

"Why not walk?" suggested Indy, finally annoyed as well.

Despite his stature, the professor didn't care much for physical exercise. He preferred to sit for hours consulting manuscripts or the oldest books. Finally, the vehicle arrived. An antique cart pulled by horses.

"French really have to catch up," thought Indy. "Back in America, it's all automobiles or buses."

Of course, this mode of transportation from another century didn't help their situation. Its slowness only worsened their delay... and the professor's bad mood. On the way, Indiana tried to lighten the mood. Pointing to a man pushing a strange cart topped with a stone wheel, he exclaimed "Did you see that, Dad? What's that man doing?"

Shrugging, Henry Jones replied "Oh, that's just a grinder. He goes from street to street offering to sharpen knives."

Then, grumbling, he returned to his thoughts. Henry Jones wasn't one to be distracted by the street scene. He hardly paid attention to daily trivialities. He was only interested in the grand history, the real one, worthy of appearing in textbooks. For Indy, on the other hand, the world was a more exciting book than any in the libraries. He loved to study and learn from it. Giving up on explaining this to his father, he continued to observe what was happening outside. They were now passing the old fortifications. After the limestone buildings cut at right angles and neatly aligned, a zone of vacant lots and small gardens began. Here and there, modest houses. Sometimes, a plank cabin. A touch of countryside at the city's edge.

"We'll be arriving soon," announced Henry Jones, examining his map, looking relieved. At that moment, a flock of geese emerged from a paved courtyard and blocked the road.

Their vehicle stopped to let the poultry pass, moving together, heads up, squawking. A boy in wooden shoes followed them leisurely, prodding them into a

neat group with the tip of his stick.

“Gorgeous Cathedrals going back centuries and I am searching for evidence of Christianity in what will probably be a sewer built during our Civil War” exclaimed the professor.

“Dad,” interrupted Indy, “You always say we should keep our minds open to learning on vacation, I remember you saying...”

“Vacation, maybe! That’s no reason to waste our time.”

Unable to control himself, the professor leaped from his seat. Indy followed suit immediately. And they both jumped off the vehicle. Indy had rarely seen his father in such a state of agitation, except once or twice. And, coincidentally, when they were... on vacation!

“Let’s go, follow me, and let’s get this over with!”

After getting lost twice in dead-end alleys, they arrived at the meeting point, over an hour late. It was at the end of a sloping street that ended in a dead-end, at the foot of a sort of cliff. Large doors were carved into the stone.

Indy recognized Triphon Héricard’s rotund silhouette from afar. Wearing a boater hat, he paced back and forth in front of the entrance of a stone building. In the shadow of the entry porch, about two or three meters from them, stood another man who remained as still as a statue.

As soon as he spotted the Joneses Héricard ran in their direction as fast as his large boots and short legs would allow. Quite out of breath, he

literally threw himself at Professor Jones and gave him a hug, as if they had known each other for a long time.

“My dear Henry, I am truly delighted!”

“Come now, sir. Really!” protested Henry Jones very dignifiedly, his face reddening. He tried to push Héricard away, but the man, worse than a leech, was neither willing to let go nor to let him speak.

“My dear Henry,” Héricard continued, “allow me to introduce you to the Inspector General of the Quarries, Gilbert de Bury.”

With the tip of his goatee, he pointed to the man who had been standing apart from the beginning. The stranger stepped forward. He was almost two meters tall, all bones, his face chiseled with bold features in marble-like flesh. He wore a monocle that made him grimace. His severe countenance was accentuated by a very strict black suit and a round hat whose brim shaded his eyes.

“He must not laugh often,” thought Indy as Héricard continued:

“As I mentioned earlier, my dear de Bury, Professor Henry Jones, passing through Paris with his son, expressed his desire to visit the crypt recently discovered after a collapse. So, I took the liberty of arranging a meeting for today. I know that access to the quarries is strictly regulated.”

“Indeed,” de Bury cut in abruptly. “Without special authorization, public access is prohibited.”

“But surely you won’t hesitate to let us in. My friend, the famous Professor Jones, is an international authority. You can’t refuse,” interjected



Héricard.

What nerve! This Triphon Héricard had some audacity! And he lied like a tooth puller. Professor Jones was pale, outraged by the man's compound lies. Héricard did not have permission to visit the area he wanted to show and Dr. Jones did not want his name used as leverage.

Indy realized that his father was about to return to his hotel without delay. To prevent this Indy knew he had to take control of the situation. He rushed to the center of the triangle formed by the three men.

Boldly, he extended his hand to de Bury:

"Pleased to meet you, sir! All these underground tunnels must be truly fantastic!"

Surprised by this audacity, the engineer shook the hand Indy offered him. The contact of his fingers was hard and cold, just like his gaze.

In a cavernous voice, he asked:

"So, you're interested in the quarries? There are certainly many other things to see in Paris. And much more exciting ones!"

"I hope to be an archaeologist someday. It's amazing the discoveries you can make underground. Most of the world's secrets and incredible treasures are still buried there."

De Bury nodded, then turning to the professor, he said "A budding scholar! If he keeps it up, I feel your son will have a great career."

Henry Jones, overwhelmed by the turn of events, forced himself to smile. He had resigned himself. If his son was so eager to visit these

quarries, they would visit them. Sensing that the situation was in his favor, Héricard was jubilant.

“Well, since we’re all in agreement, let’s go,” he said, setting off with determined strides towards the entrance. Immediately, Indy followed suit, followed by Professor Jones.

“Wait! Not so fast!” protested de Bury weakly. But it was too late. The two men and the boy had already entered the building. In reality, it was a sort of immense room carved out of the stone. It was about twenty meters long and five meters high. A few light bulbs scattered here and there provided their faint electric glow. It looked and felt like the mouth of an ice giant who had garlands stuck in its teeth. Before they could go too far, de Bury had caught up with the visitors. Grudgingly, he had resolved to serve as their guide.

“Here you have the offices of the General Quarry Inspection,” he explained, pointing to two tiny huts built inside the immense room carved into the rock. “These are our offices and the workshops for the workers. Today is a holiday, there are no employees, except for me... because my home is right next door.”

He also showed them the stables for the draft animals used for underground work, and another room where an automobile was parked. Héricard was starting to get impatient. He kept pacing back and forth grumbling. Suddenly, with his head down, he charged towards Gilbert de Bury. His charge only stopped a few centimeters from the engineer who sidestepped him.

“For heaven’s sake, that’s enough!” he shouted. “All this is of no interest to Professor Jones! We didn’t come for your administration, it’s the crypt that interests us. Will you take us there at last?” De Bury stiffened, adjusted his monocle, and checked his watch, looking worried.

“This is at least the fifth time he’s looked at it,” noted Indy. “You’d think he’s waiting for someone.”

“Patience,” retorted the engineer, swallowing hard.

“If I may,” intervened Henry Jones, who hadn’t spoken for several minutes, “we don’t have much time left. I have an appointment early in the afternoon.”

“You see,” triumphed Héricard. “Let’s go now. And without delay!”

Once again, Indy noticed the engineer’s peculiar behavior. Despite the coolness of the atmosphere, he was sweating. He glanced at his watch again. And, almost reluctantly, he headed towards a door at the far end of the vast room. He pulled out a heavy key from his pocket, inserted it into the lock, and turned it. As it opened, the door creaked on its hinges. Cut into the rock mass, a staircase appeared.

“Extraordinary!” exclaimed Indy as he plunged into it. “It feels like we’re in the pyramids of Egypt.”

Quick as a mountain goat on a rocky slope, he descended the steps four at a time. Much less agile, Héricard assured each of his steps on the damp

stairs. He quickly fell fifteen steps behind. Behind him, came Henry Jones who shouted “Wait for us, Junior. This underground network is immense. It’s 350 kilometers long. You could get lost.”

“O.K., prof!” replied Indy.

His father seemed to see danger everywhere. How could one get lost in this tunnel, illuminated as if it were daylight?

Impossible! And then, darn it! He’d had more than enough. He kept moving forward. The other three would catch up with him eventually.

At the bottom of the stairs, he turned left into a sort of corridor. He couldn’t hear his father and the others anymore. He had lost sight of them now. They would surely catch up with him soon.

It was only when he found himself quite far down an unlit corridor that he finally decided to wait. The silence was almost complete. Pressed against the wall, he could only hear drops of water falling from the ceiling.

When a noise echoed in the darkness, Indy jumped. He held his breath. Footsteps! A light! Someone was approaching. And it wasn’t his companions. Instinctively the young adventurer grabbed his whip. The stranger approached in the glow of Indy’s light. He soon got close enough for Indy to make out his face, his prominent cheekbones, his large drooping mustache, and his widely receding forehead. What surprised him the most were his shoes: yellow leather boots that gleamed. The man was only two meters away now. He suddenly raised his lamp high. In an instant, Indy

seemed to be in broad daylight.

“Who’s there?” the man asked abruptly, with a strong Eastern accent.

Caught off guard, Indy took three steps back.

Menacingly, the man advanced the same distance, a hint of aggression in his eyes.

“Who was this guy, What was he doing down here? No time for that”, when he lunged at Indiana he was barely able to back away and roll out of the man’s hands. Surprised by such agility, the man slipped trying to keep up. He almost lost his balance but managed to regain it just in time.

In the lamp’s light, Indy saw a roll of paper falling from the stranger’s pocket. Just then, Professor Jones’s voice echoed nearby “Junior! What are you up to? Why aren’t you answering?”

The stranger hesitated, then, hearing footsteps approaching, immediately retreated into an adjacent corridor. Indy, bold as ever, wanted to pursue him. But in the dark and without a lamp, it was impossible. He retraced his steps and just managed to slip the roll of paper into the inner pocket of his jacket before Professor Jones and de Bury appeared.

“Junior! For heaven’s sake! Why weren’t you answering?”

“I’m here,” Indy called out, emerging from the dark corridor.

“Do you find this amusing, perhaps? I was starting to wonder if you had fallen!”

“It’s true, my boy,” Gilbert de Bury insisted solemnly. “There are pits everywhere.”

With his lamp, the engineer illuminated an opening





in the floor a meter from Indy. It was a well, a real well closed by a grille.

Professor Jones threw a stone into it to gauge the depth.

“At least ten meters,” he concluded. “Imagine if there hadn’t been any protection!”

“I caught a man,” Indy retorted to create a diversion. “He fled that way.”

“Impossible!” exclaimed de Bury. “No one enters here without my permission. He’d be at the bottom of one of these pits.”

“No one! Let me laugh!” scoffed Héricard. “There are plenty of access points! They’re everywhere, you know.” Then, turning to Indy and his father, he added, “It’s known that these tunnels are full of smugglers. Not to mention the bandits and throat-cutters who know the safest routes and gather there to share their loot.”

De Bury shrugged and disdainfully declined to respond. He leaned towards Indy and, in a cutting tone, interrogated him:

“And may I know what this phantom looked like, young curious one?”

Without Indy being able to explain why, he sensed a sort of threat behind this question. Nevertheless, he responded “I’ve never seen a ghost with a pair of mustaches and yellow shoes!”

At these words, Gilbert de Bury lost his composure “You waste my time with the tour and your answers mock me, your father...”

It was then that Professor Jones intervened “Gentlemen, that’s enough! If you want us to visit

this crypt, let's go right now. Otherwise, I'm leaving! I won't waste another second in useless discussion!"

"Fine, lets leave," declared Gilbert de Bury, becoming increasingly unpleasant.

"Certainly not! I'm here, and I'm staying," corrected Héricard, raising his voice.

The two men stared each other down. For a good minute, they stood facing each other, like two fighting cocks ready to pounce.

"They're ridiculous," thought Indy.

Finally, de Bury stepped back. Standing tall, he looked down at Héricard and sneered:

"While you show your operetta crypt to your guests, I'll make sure there's no one else around."

"I'll accompany you," declared Héricard.

"Certainly not! Mind your own business!"

With that, he disappeared into the tunnel where the stranger with the yellow shoes had vanished.

Why did he want to be alone? And why was Héricard so insistent on following him? Certainly, many mysteries to unravel...

## Chapter 3

### A Damp Crypt

Indy had often experienced adventures underground. He'd prefer this to eating tripe. Yet, in the dark tunnels, like the one he was currently navigating with his father and Héricard, he couldn't help but feel a certain unease. It was stronger than him. He imagined evil forces in the darkness, swarming insects, blood-sucking bats, and above all, snakes slithering from all sides.

Fortunately Héricard had brought a miner's lamp. It illuminated so weakly that Indy and his father couldn't see much around them. Even less at their feet where the ground, dripping with seepage, was covered in dangerously slippery mud.

"Good grief!" exclaimed the professor for the tenth time. "I just submerged one of my shoes! A splendid pair of boots purchased at great expense, two months ago, from one of England's most renowned shoemakers."

Indy suppressed a quip. He didn't have this problem. He wore thick, comfortable, durable, and waterproof leather boots. He felt like retorting to his father, "You see, dad, my crushers are quite useful!" as the professor usually called them.

But Henry Jones's patience had limits. And they were reached, if not exceeded. Indy kept quiet.

"Will we finally arrive?" he exclaimed, exasperated. "I'm really getting more than enough of this!"

"Five minutes, professor. Just five little

minutes,” replied Héricard, whose chubby face was outlined in the flickering light of the carbide lamp.

“That’s what you claimed five minutes ago,” retorted Henry Jones, cuttingly. “I’m beginning to doubt your word, sir! Your estimates seem to change with each breath!”

“I assure you,” protested the indignant man, rolling his eyes. “In five minutes, we’ll reach our destination.” He set off as fast as his short legs would allow.

Indy brought up the rear. For a few minutes no one spoke. The sounds of footsteps could be heard mixed with echos. In the corridors, in the niches, in every nook and cranny, darkness reigned. Hadn’t Héricard mentioned criminals? Hidden in the shadows, someone could have jumped on them to slit their throats. They were helpless as they moved forward, totally preoccupied with hitting their heads or soaking their feet. Indy thought back to the man with the yellow shoes. Had de Bury caught up with him? Who was he? Why had he been aggressive? Where had he fled? So many questions he would have liked to clarify.

Soon, the tunnel widened. Its vaulted ceiling rose. They were approaching a source of light. Finally, they arrived at an opening. Clearly, it had been freshly bricked up. A brand-new iron gate sealed it shut.

“Good grief!” panicked Héricard. “The entrance to the crypt is sealed. Another move by Gilbert de Bury! We’ll have to wait for his return to enter.”

“No way! I won’t waste another second. Come on, Indy, we’re leaving!” And without waiting, Henry Jones turned back.

Dismayed, Héricard remained motionless and silent, wringing his hands. As for Indy, he found it a shame to give up so close to the goal. He tried pushing the heavy gate.

“Wait, dad. The gate isn’t locked. You just had to push it!”

“Why didn’t I try?” exclaimed Héricard, slapping his forehead with the palm of his hand. “We can be so stupid sometimes.”

Indy had already crossed the threshold. Behind him, Héricard waited for Henry Jones, who was retracing his steps. The professor’s anxiety meant he examined the lock before loudly reminding everyone “The locking system of this gate is automatic. Without the key, if this closes behind us we’ll be prisoners of this damp rat hole”. No risk even if that were to happen!” replied Héricard. “De Bury will come back. He carries a master key that allows him to open all locks.”

Somewhat reluctantly, Henry Jones followed Héricard into the immense underground chamber where Indiana was waiting for them. It measured at least ten meters high and twenty meters wide. But the most impressive was the opening that the collapse had carved in the ceiling.

A square of sky was cut out, diffusing a few rays of light. A pyramid, formed of earth and stone blocks, filled half of the space.

“Here we are,” exclaimed Héricard, displaying

a satisfied expression. "You are facing the famous crypt I told you about. It was uncovered by this collapse. Do you realize how lucky you are to be here? Until now, no one knew of its existence." Indy couldn't contain himself. Moreover, he had completely forgotten about the man with the yellow shoes and the roll of paper in the pocket of his jacket. All excited, he wandered off, his nose in the air. He looked like a hunting dog on the scent of game.

"Watch out, young man! Don't go over there, there's still a risk of accident. You see those blocks," continued the amateur archaeologist, pointing with the end of his cane to huge rocks, "they are unstable and can slide at any moment down the clay slope. The excavation work has just begun. Move away from there," ordered the professor, nervously. Reluctantly obeying, Indy returned to his father's side. Héricard launched into lengthy explanations.

"In my opinion, this crypt dates back to the Middle Ages. According to the result of my research, it would have served as a secret church to a sect of Devil worshippers. At that time, as you know, witches and warlocks were hunted down and publicly burned. It was better for them to hide." Displaying a skeptical air, Professor Jones listened to Héricard with a distracted ear.

"Hmm," he said with a doubtful expression. "I'm not a specialist in witchcraft. And there are usually more legends in this matter than anywhere else. Why didn't you correct me when I assumed Christian?"

“Forgive me for contradicting you, professor. I know the extent of your knowledge, but I’m not a blabbermouth, if that’s what you’re insinuating. Devil Worship is to some scholars in the Christian tradition and I am not one to contradict an expert”

“I never said you had nothing to show,” defended Henry Jones.

“But you implied it, which amounts to the same thing!” insisted Héricard, tapping his cane on the ground. The man was getting heated. “I’m just insistent, tell me know that was unfounded.” What a bad temper,” thought Indy. “He’s going to get angry again. In any case, that’s not how he’ll convince dad. Quite the opposite!”

“No need to discuss any longer,” interrupted Henry Jones, calmly. “Show me your findings, and let’s go. This visit has lasted long enough!” Tired of waiting for the two men, Indy preceded them. He began to explore the walls of a rough rock wall where traces of chisels and picks remained. Suddenly, in a darker recess, he glimpsed shapes. He approached them. In the shadow, sculptures were hidden. He reached out and felt them blindly.

“Dad! Dad! Statuettes. Come see, they are carved directly into the limestone!” Héricard and Henry Jones, who were only a few meters away, rushed over. The statuettes appeared clearly in the lamp light. They depicted a half-man, half-goat figure, surrounded by several monstrous animals.

“You see,” exclaimed Héricard triumphantly, “this crypt contains treasures.”



Instead of replying, Henry Jones examined Indy's discoveries at length. In silence, Héricard and Indy awaited the verdict. While Indiana sometimes found his father boring and a killjoy, he admired the soundness of his judgment. In his field, the professor was rarely wrong. When he finished his examination, he removed his iron-rimmed glasses and, after a moment of reflection, declared:

"I fear you may be the victim of a merry prankster," Henry Jones continued calmly.

"How so?" squeaked the little man, astounded.

"Impossible! That is positively impossible!"

Without losing his composure, Henry Jones continued, "In my opinion, these sculptures were carved by amateurs who..."

The professor couldn't continue. In a fury, Héricard began to stamp his feet like a child. He threw his straw hat to the ground and stomped on it while spitting out incomprehensible sounds "Crou... tou... gnoul! Ga..."

Completely astonished, Indy and his father watched this bizarre scene. With bloodshot eyes and veins bulging in his neck, the man seemed on the verge of asphyxiation. They had to intervene, or he risked a heart attack. Just then, a sinister creaking echoed, followed by a sharp clack. The gate had just closed! As if by magic, Héricard's fit stopped abruptly.

Indy immediately sprinted; in three seconds, he had covered the fifteen meters separating him from the iron bars. He barely had time to glimpse a fleeing shadow. But above all, he saw the gleam of a

pair of yellow shoes. He rushed to the bars, pushing with all his might. The gate didn't budge an inch. They were indeed trapped!

"What did I say? What did I say?" repeated the professor, who had joined his son.

With his head bare, hair in disarray, Héricard followed. Looking as crestfallen as a beaten dog, he questioned, "How could this gate have closed?"

"A ghost, perhaps," Indy quipped, determined not to mention that he had seen the man with the yellow shoes again. (It wasn't the time to worsen the situation.)

"A ghost, you think?" Héricard naively asked. Clearly angry, Henry Jones turned to him, "You fool! Of course, it's not a ghost. And anyway, it doesn't matter! None of that matters. The only thing that matters is finding a way out of here. Do you have a solution to propose?"

"W-well... uh..." the amateur archaeologist stammered. "If you wanted to ruin my vacation, bravo! You succeeded! For once, I was spending them peacefully with my son. And all this for a supposed archaeological discovery! Let me laugh!"

"It's okay," Indy replied, attempting to calm his father. "Logically, de Bury shouldn't be far."

"We just have to wait for him," Héricard chimed in, convinced he was offering a miraculous solution.

"That's it, that's all I have to do!" grumbled the professor again, sitting on a stone block. "I came to visit one of the most beautiful cities in the world, and I'm going to waste my time in the mud of the

underground! It's unbelievable!"

"Over there, a light!" exclaimed Indy. "Someone's coming." Immediately, Henry Jones stood up and approached the gate. All three of them, clustered around the bars, watched the light growing in the dark depths.

"Over here!" yelled Héricard. "Come and free us." No response. Yet the lamp continued to advance in their direction. Soon, they made out a silhouette that could be Gilbert de Bury. A minute later, the Inspector General of Quarries stood before them. It's fair to say he was taking his time. What was he up to? Soon, his bony face, framed by the prominent muscles of his clenched jaw, became visible. Just as enigmatic and cold under the black bell of his round hat.

"Could you hurry up a bit?" grumbled Triphon Héricard, gripping the bars. With pursed lips and hollow cheeks, de Bury extended his lamp at arm's length.

"Well, Mr. Héricard, what are you playing today? You look like a monkey in a zoo! Ha! Ha! Ha!" he sneered. A hint of contempt could be seen in his clear eyes.

"Open this gate without further delay!" ordered Héricard, barely containing his rage. The engineer pulled out a large set of keys from his canvas jacket pocket. He twirled them around, saying, "What would you do if I decided to let you rot in your crypt? You're sick!" yelled Héricard, trying to grab the engineer through the bars. "Open up!"

“You can scream all you want! No one will hear you,” replied de Bury, stepping back three paces. What was de Bury playing at? Indy glanced quickly at his father. It was obvious the professor needed to intervene to put an end to this prank.

“Mr. de Bury!” therefore exclaimed the professor to the engineer, “I understand that you may have issues to settle with Mr. Héricard. But my son and I are not responsible for anything. This joke has gone on long enough, free us!” And turning to Indy, he added, “Indeed, my poor Junior, I don’t understand what’s going on. One thing is certain, we’ve stumbled upon lunatics!

“Blödsinn! Are you sure you’re not responsible for anything?” de Bury replied, turning to Indiana. “We always have something to blame ourselves for, don’t we, young snooper?” The engineer stared intently at Indiana. His gaze was so penetrating it seemed as if he could read the young boy’s thoughts. But Indy stood firm. Despite the discomfort he felt, he didn’t look away.

“Why are you looking at my son like that? Has he done something he shouldn’t have? And watch your mouth,” Henry Jones added.

At these words, de Bury’s strange behavior suddenly changed. Choosing a key from among all those he held, he inserted it into the lock and opened it. Héricard immediately rushed outside, like a madman. In passing, he shoved de Bury and Henry Jones without bothering to apologize. He didn’t say a single word and, without waiting, he hurried away.

“What’s gotten into him? Indy asked while

trying to remember the last thing de Bury said.

“Oh, it’s nothing,” replied the engineer. “That old eccentric has no sense of humor. Because, you understand, I never had any intention of leaving you to languish in this damp room.”

“Sense of humor? That man has a rather strange sense of humor,” Indy inwardly marveled. “And rather bizarre behavior.”

Indeed, de Bury was smiling. It was the first time since the beginning of their encounter. He had also removed his hat, revealing his baldness. An immense scar crossed his shining skull. His face looked happier but his appearance was scarier. A bit like he had received a saber blow. Did they do saber fencing in Parisian schools like they did in German private schools?

Henry Jones sr., busy wiping his nearsighted glasses probably hadn’t seen anything. As soon as he adjusted them on his nose, he pulled out his watch from his waistcoat pocket.

“Huh? What? Already 1 o’clock! My God, it’s not possible! I have an appointment with my old friend, Professor Cassegraine, at 2 o’clock. Misery, I’ll never make it!”

“But yes, dad, we’ll make it. We just need to leave right away and take a taxi,” replied Indy, preferring, for now, to calm the situation. “Your son is right. An hour will be more than enough to get back to your hotel. And besides, as your delay is my fault, allow me to drive you back with my car. But by the way, which hotel are you staying at?”

“At the Hotel du Cherche-Midi.”

“Very well,” sighed Bury. “The Hotel du Cherche-Midi. A very good hotel. And now, let’s go.”

Leading Indy with his lamp in hand, de Bury quickened his pace. Shortly after, they arrived at the bottom of the stairs, which they climbed up to the immense entrance hall of the quarries. Barely twenty minutes had passed. Triphon Héricard had already disappeared. De Bury invited them to follow him to a box closed by two solid wooden doors.

The car, parked there sheltered from the weather, was a recent model with an open driver’s seat, a long step, a canvas hood, and rubber tires. Indy sat in the back, on a bench that smelled of new leather. His father sat next to the engineer, in the front passenger seat. And they left.

After laboriously climbing a steep slope, the vehicle entered narrow, winding, and completely battered alleys. No one spoke. The noise of the engine and the wheels on the cobblestones did not favor conversation. However, Indiana leaned forward, raising his voice to be heard.

“Mr. de Bury, earlier, did you find the man with the yellow shoes?” Indy asked. De Bury twitched, and his stern gaze met Indy’s in the rearview mirror.

“I didn’t find anyone, young man!”

“A crazy man who grabs children in yellow shoes is as likely as a Cro-Magnon man in wedding attire! You had a hallucination, I believe,” he affirmed dryly.

“Yet,” protested Indy, “I’m sure.”

“Junior, please! Let’s forget this insignificant

story, shall we? Just like this phony crypt and Triphon Héricard. What an unpleasant fellow he is! I've rarely seen someone with such a bad temper."

"Agreed, I must have been dreaming," admitted Indiana, though convinced otherwise. "But allow me to ask you one last question: are there other ways to enter the quarries?"

As if regretting having been unpleasant, de Bury tried to answer kindly: "Of course, there are secret entrances all over the place. Including ventilation shafts equipped with ladders that can be used to descend. You see this construction? It's precisely one of these shafts. They are indispensable, you see, otherwise we would suffocate underground."

"I understand, I understand," repeated Indy while pondering. Thus, it was possible to come and go in the underground freely. The idea tempted him to return without his father; however, he said nothing about his plan. The professor would have categorically forbidden it.

"There are shafts like this one all over the place," de Bury continued, hands on the steering wheel. "In public gardens or in private courtyards."

"Are they deep?"

"From twenty to forty meters."

"So a fall inside would be deadly," remarked Professor Jones, as if cautioning Indiana.

"You're right, professor, accidents are not rare. Strange things even happen there. One day, one of my colleagues found an impressive pile of cat



skulls at the bottom of one of them.”

“Ugh! Cat skulls!”

“Yes, young man, cat skulls. There were more than two meters high. Intrigued, my colleague searched in vain for an explanation for this mystery. A little later, he discovered this: the shaft led to the courtyard of a restaurant renowned for its rabbit stew.”

“Horror!” exclaimed Professor Jones, turning to his son. “It’s enough to put you off eating rabbit. Isn’t it, Junior?”

“No, I don’t think so,” replied Indy, provocatively. “Eating cat, snails, or... tripe, like you did last night, I don’t see the difference.”

“That’s true,” continued the engineer, lips twisting into a strange grin. “You can also eat rat. Parisians ate a lot of them during the siege of the city by the Prussians. Survival required it.” Instead of responding to these provocations, the professor shrugged and kept his eyes on the road. They were now descending the Boulevard Saint-Michel, which led to the Seine. It took them no more than five minutes to reach their hotel. As lunch service was over, they only agreed to have a cold meal brought to their room. They ate quickly. Professor Jones especially did not want to be late for his appointment.

“I hope this afternoon affords me enough learning to forget this blasted morning. Truly wasted time,” he grumbled, finishing his chicken leg. Indiana, with his mouth full, just replied with a noncommittal “Hmm” that meant everything and

nothing. He thought no less. Deep down, he found this adventure rather amusing. And intriguing as well. Indy was digging into a large slice of strawberry pie when his father urged him, “Pull yourself together, my boy! You still need to change before we go to my friend Professor Cassegraine’s.”

“Meh,” muttered the boy, grimacing. “I’d rather stay here quietly.”

“But my friend Cassegraine has one of the most beautiful butterfly collections I’ve ever seen. Really, it’s worth seeing, believe me! Come on, go to your room and get dressed!” Indy’s room was adjoining. To get there, he just had to cross the shared bathroom. Dragging his feet, Indiana went there reluctantly. It was fair to say that the prospect of an afternoon at the old Professor Cassegraine’s did not lift his spirits. But finally, he had to please his father for once. He began to undress. The jacket first. It was only then that he remembered the roll of paper that had fallen from the pocket of the man with the yellow shoes.

Feverishly, he unrolled it. It was a rather crude plan; in the middle, there was a cross; and below, an inscription that was very poorly written, almost indecipherable:

Radium Ossuary 4R C88.

What could this possibly mean? Indiana didn’t know the meaning of these two words. Immediately, he thought of a code. Yes, it could be a code. But to indicate what? They had walked into a mystery...

## Chapter 4

### A message worth its weight in gold.

The afternoon seemed very long. Of course, Professor Cassegraine had a marvelous collection of butterflies. There were all kinds, of all sizes, of all colors. They came from Africa, Russia, Asia, and even China. However, the boy's mind was too preoccupied to truly be interested in them. Indy was impressed that he also felt bad for the bugs, stuck through with pins and all. He had not stopped thinking about the message written that the mysterious stranger in yellow shoes had dropped. What was its meaning? Indiana had no idea, but he was convinced of one thing: this message was related to a matter of the utmost seriousness. And his intuition rarely failed him.

After dinner he and his father went for a walk on the boulevards his father deemed culturally important and during this time Indy's suspicions had only been confirmed. As they made their way through the crowds gathered around the street performers, bear showmen, strongmen lifting enormous weights, and candy vendors, Indiana thought he noticed a man following them from a distance. As usual, Henry Jones sr. hadn't seen a thing, and his son, knowing his reactions in advance, had kept him out of it.

Finally, they had entered a cinema to watch *Fin de réveillon*, a silent comedy film about a man who gets so intoxicated he sees double. The senior Jones mentioned reading about the films of Georges

Méliès but expressed concern that the movie's contents might be a bad influence on society. There too, a stranger had sat two rows behind them. Bundled up in a scarf that covered half his face, he was obviously trying to go unnoticed. But Indiana, attentive to everything as always, had noticed his yellow shoes. Shoes that were now stained with mud. Were they the same as the stranger's shoes in the underground or just a coincidence? A strange coincidence!

Later, after the screening, the man had followed them back to their hotel. Indy both knew he was being followed and nothing about why. This did not disturb the boy's sleep one bit. In the scale of his recent life one crazy guy in yellow shoes was small potatoes. He had spent so much time sleeping on trains and boats. A proper French bed was amazing. After a good night's rest he woke up feeling ready for adventure.

When he arrived in the restaurant for breakfast his father was already there. Seated at a white-clothed table near a window overlooking the street, he was calmly drinking his tea. Through the window, he watched the rain falling steadily.

"So, Junior, slept well?"

"Dad!" replied the boy reproachfully.

"Sorry, I meant, Indiana, of course!" the professor corrected himself, a mocking smile on his lips. "We're out of luck today. The weather is really bad."

Indiana mumbled an incomprehensible reply. Thinking only of satisfying his wolfish hunger, he

took his seat opposite his father. On the table, a container full of hot chocolate was steaming. He poured himself a cup, then pounced on a donut overflowing with delicious jam. After drinking half of his cup without pausing, he attacked a pile of pancakes with honey and quince jelly.

“Junior. Show some restraint, will you! You’re embarrassing me. You look like you haven’t eaten in years. And you could at least take off your hat. It’s very rude to keep it on. Everyone is watching us!”

Indiana straightened up and looked around.

No one seemed to be paying the slightest attention to what Henry Jones sr. considered a wild display of improper manners. So he just raised the visor of his dear Weston and swallowed another pancake with a sigh of pleasure.

“By the way, you didn’t answer me,” the professor continued, giving up the idea of sermonizing his insolent son. “Did you sleep well?”

“Oh yes! Very well,” replied Indy enthusiastically. Indeed, he had not woken up once during the night and felt in dazzling form. Ready to expend crazy energy.

“Well, not me!” Henry Jones continued. “I couldn’t stop thinking about our day yesterday. Or, more precisely, about Triphon Héricard. What a nasty fellow to waste our time and lock us in like that, don’t you think?”

“No more or less than de Bury,” thought Indiana, remembering the strange impression the engineer had left him with. “That guy is creepy.”

But before he could answer, his father continued “That’s not all. Someone tried to enter my room around midnight, 1 a.m. I got up right away. Footsteps receded in the corridor. I quickly opened my door. Too late. I only caught a glimpse of a shadow at the end of the hallway, and, I believe, a pair of yellow shoes, but I’m not sure.”

Frowning, Indiana stopped chewing. “More and more bizarre,” he thought. “Again, this stranger. What could he want from us?”

But instead of sharing his thoughts with his father, he suddenly jumped up like a spring releasing its tension.

“What’s our agenda for today? I’m feeling restless. I’m ready to walk miles,” he boasted. Behind his glasses, Professor Jones’s tired, reddened eyes blinked wearily. Clearly, he wasn’t in great shape. It seemed the wine tasted a little too excellent yesterday. Unbelievably, he hadn’t even trimmed around his always neat beard.

“Slow down,” he replied. “This morning, I’d like to enjoy our short vacation and take a bit of time to live.”

Indiana couldn’t believe his ears. The professor intended to laze around.

Unheard of. It was the type of talk he had heard his father mock as lazy and self-centered.

Bounding upwards, Indy stood behind his father’s chair. He placed both hands on his father’s shoulders and gave them something between a slap and a massage.

“Come on, old man, pull yourself together!”

Half annoyed, half amused, the professor sighed.

“You couldn’t be more right, my son. There are mornings when I feel myself aging. Do you know what I’d like when I see this rain? To have my feet warm in my slippers and quietly read the newspapers by a cozy fireplace.”

“Pfff! Nice plan!” whistled Indiana, who conceived vacations to be a bit more lively based on prior events.

Henry Jones didn’t respond. He finished buttering his toast, then sank into his padded seat to savor it with the airs of a grandmother in a tearoom. After finishing, he delicately wiped his mouth. Meanwhile, Indiana had already circled the table three times.

“Stop! You’re making me dizzy. If you have so much energy to spend, go buy the newspapers for me,” he said, handing a bill to Indiana.

“Right away, boss!”

Finally, he would be able to stretch his legs. At a brisk pace, he headed for the exit. At the hotel door, the rain, which had just intensified, stopped him in his tracks.

As he slipped the bill his father had just given him into his jacket pocket, he felt the roll of paper he had found the day before.

“A weather for visiting the underground,” he thought. “At least, we would be sheltered from the rain.”

Alas! That was not on the agenda.

He pushed his hat down on his head, pulled up the collar of his jacket, and stepped out. Walking



as fast as he could, he hugged the walls, lowering his head. He was alone in the street, yet he had the unpleasant sensation of being followed. He looked around him: no one.

He reached the newspaper kiosk in just five minutes, bought the morning press, and immediately set off again. He had covered half the distance when he heard the door of a parked car suddenly open just behind him.

His sixth sense warned him that it was time to sprint. He heard a man yell from the parked car.

“This time, you’re done for, cursed kid! You won’t escape me!”

“The stranger with the yellow boots!” Indiana recognized his accent. Indy began to sprint in an attempt to outdistance him. The footsteps were close behind.

Without taking the time to check if a car was coming, he crossed an intersection. At the same moment, a pedestrian emerged from the left. Indiana narrowly avoided him. The same couldn’t be said for his pursuer, who, from what Indiana heard, slipped on the wet cobblestones and tumbled into the gutter.

Indiana now knew he was safe. He turned around, and who did he see? Charles, the young hotel waiter, holding off the stranger with the yellow shoes with an umbrella whose tip was as sharp as a sword.

The man struggled to his feet. Then, limping, he staggered to his car.

“You’ll pay for this, you bunch of rascals! I’ll be back! You’ll see!”



“Not very friendly, this rude character,” noted the young waiter, who had joined Indiana.

The car’s engine roared to life. In a cloud of black smoke, the vehicle passed by Charles and Indy. Through the open window, the man raised his fist and shouted something. Undoubtedly a threat.

“A really impolite Ostrogoth,” continued Charles. “I was coming along quietly when I saw him chasing after you. I thought I should come to your aid. I extended my umbrella, and the poor man tripped over it. He couldn’t avoid it. Quite clumsy, really!”

“Indeed!” replied Indiana, appreciating the waiter’s humor. Indy wondered what an Ostrogoth was.

“But what did he want?” Charles asked anxiously.

“Maybe he wanted to steal your magnificent beret?” Indiana lied, beginning to suspect that the man had a more serious reason for chasing him. Perhaps he was trying to retrieve his lost plan. And if he was so keen on it, that piece of paper must have been valuable. But why?

Indiana returned to the hotel with Charles. This young man, aged sixteen and a bit, and as Indiana had also learned, Charles was French, but not Parisian. After warmly thanking him, the young American hurried to find his father, who must have been getting impatient by now. Indeed, Henry Jones sr. was pacing the restaurant where he was now alone.

“I was wondering if you were coming back. It

took you quite a while for three measly newspapers. Will the news still be fresh?”

“Maybe not fresh, but definitely damp, that’s for sure,” Indiana quipped, handing over the newspapers.

“Damp? Not as much as you, you rascal! Look at you, it’s not a hat you have on your head, it’s a fountain!”

Indiana removed his dripping hat, freeing his light brown hair, which remained dry. He wiped it with the back of his sleeve, whistling an exhale.

Annoyed, Professor Jones took his wet newspapers and went to sit on the sofa in the lobby. There, comfortably surrounded by Persian rugs and marquetry, he immersed himself in his sacred reading.

Dragging his feet, Indiana, who wasn’t amused at playing the homebody, came slumping into a chair opposite his father, sighing. It was at that moment that a big headline on the front page caught his attention:

## THEFT OF RADIUM AT THE CURIE INSTITUTE

Radium? Wasn’t that one of the words from the message?

Excitedly, Indiana pulled the paper out of his pocket, unfolded it, and read: Radium Ossuary 4R C88.

“Well, I’ll be darned!” he thought. “What a coincidence! But what on earth is this radium?” To find out more, all he had to do was ask his father.

However, when Professor Jones started reading the newspaper, it was impossible to interrupt him. And that could go on for hours. Unable to wait that long, Indiana, completely worked up, got down on his knees and crawled closer to try and read the story. Barely had he begun to decipher the article when his father turned the page.

“Oh no, darn it!”

The professor jumped so abruptly that he tore the newspaper halfway.

“What’s gotten into you, Junior, have you gone mad?”

“Th... th... the rad... the radium,” stuttered Indiana.

“That’s what I thought!” replied the professor to himself. “The boy’s lost his mind. If you find it funny, well, I certainly don’t! First, do you even know what radium is?”

“Uh, no,” admitted Indiana. “Maybe it’s some kind of big radish from a very rare species.”

“Nonsense!” exclaimed the professor. “What have I done to deserve such a scientifically illiterate son! Do you see why I read these newspapers?”

Amused, Indiana rolled his eyes mischievously. Once again, he was enjoying getting his father angry, and it worked!

“I don’t like your jokes, Junior. Especially since this matter is serious.”

At these words, Indiana stopped his antics and returned to his seat.

“Radium is a naturally occurring radioactive element discovered by Marie Curie, a Polish woman

married to a Frenchman. It took many years of research to produce a tiny amount of it, which is kept in a vial. It's this vial that has just been stolen."

"A vial is so tiny," remarked Indiana. "Why is it so serious that it was stolen?"

"Because the powers of this substance are enormous. It emits rays that can cure serious diseases, like cancer, for example. Unbelievable potential that is now lost.

With the tremendous energy contained in this substance, scientists believe they can also generate electricity. Or unfortunately, formidable and deadly weapons."

"So, if I understand correctly, those who possess the secret of radium production could become masters of the world!"

"Exactly."

"So it's very urgent to find the vial!"

Of the utmost urgency." Indiana's brain was boiling with ideas. Now he was absolutely sure. The message he had accidentally received concerned this radioactive vial locked him in. He knew there was a good chance he could find the vial. However it wasn't enough to have the message. He still needed to understand what it meant. Unable to sit still, the boy got up from his seat. In two strides, he was in front of his father, removed his hat, took the message from the lining where he had tucked it, and thrust it under the nose of the surprised professor. "What do you think of this?" he exclaimed.

For two seconds, Henry Jones's eyes scanned the paper. "I think the person who wrote these



words should go back to primary school.”

“No,” Indiana snapped. “We don’t care if it’s poorly written. What’s important is what’s written: Radium Ossuary 4R C88.” Over his father’s shoulder, Indiana read along with his finger.

“I can read, Junior,” replied Henry Jones, annoyed. “But that doesn’t mean anything.”

“What do you mean, it doesn’t mean anything?” the boy said, throwing his hands up in the air. “It’s a code to explain where the radium is. At least, I suppose...” And rubbing his chin, he added, “If you don’t believe me, you could at least explain to me what an ossuary is.”

“Ossuary is a place where lots of bones have been gathered. Skulls, femurs, tibias. But I absolutely don’t see the connection between radium and an ossuary.”

“Well, there must be one,” Indiana replied, pacing back and forth across the rugs. “I picked up this message in the underground tunnels. The man with the yellow shoes dropped it. I’m sure it’s related to the theft of the radium.”

Exasperated, Professor Jones suddenly stood up.

“That’s enough, Junior! I’ve heard enough. This piece of paper is of no interest whatsoever. This yellow-shoed stranger never existed. Engineer de Bury was right, you were dreaming. You read too many detective novels.”

“And you, nothing is real to you if it’s not written in Latin and a thousand years old.”

“You’re wrong, Junior! I’m also interested in anything written in hieroglyphics and carved in



stone.”

“Fine, we are done,” grumbled Indiana, who was already plotting a plan. Since his father didn’t want to believe him, he would manage without him. As soon as possible, he would return to the underground tunnels. And there, it would be miraculous if he didn’t discover anything.

## Chapter 5

### The Unexpected Guide

Now that he was on the trail of the radium, Indiana couldn't stand the idea of being cooped up within the hotel. He hated feeling like a caged lion when the scent of prey was so fresh. He badgered his father to go out. The latter suggested visiting the National Library. "It's worth a look," he asserted.

However, Indiana wasn't fooled. He knew his father was waiting for the opportunity to consult one of those rare and dusty books he cherished so much. Because, vacation or no vacation, Professor Jones couldn't help but bury his nose in the oldest manuscripts, grimoires, or scrolls he could find. Fortunately the dear man was eventually persuaded to visit the Louvre Museum. Throughout the entire walk Indiana never once let his guard down. The man with the yellow shoes or any other equally ill-intentioned character could appear at any moment.

"What's wrong with you, Junior?" asked the professor, not understanding why his son was dawdling in the rain. "Usually, you're always ahead, running. Today, it seems like you have lead in your shoes. Is something wrong?"

"No, no! Everything's fine, sir!" "Then hurry up a bit!" retorted the professor, annoyed by this new impertinence. "The museum closes between noon and 2 p.m. It's already 11 o'clock. In other words, we have barely an hour." While picking up the pace, Indiana remained very attentive. Every

passerby he encountered, every carriage that passed, any car seemed suspicious to him. Finally, after walking up the narrow street of Faubourg Saint-Honoré, they arrived at the Louvre.

The immense building that had served as a palace for many kings of France seemed sad in the rain. Now it housed sculptures and paintings by the greatest masters of art as well as archaeological treasures. They entered through a dark porch.

“The ideal place for an ambush,” thought Indiana, instinctively placing one of his hands on the handle of his faithful whip. With the other, he checked that his belt held firm. The message was inside a small pocket normally meant for keeping money. At that very moment, a figure emerged from the shadows and rushed towards them. Indiana braced himself, ready to defend himself. But it was only a ragged beggar.

“A small coin, gentlemen,” begged the poor man.

“Please, for the love of God.” Professor Jones pulled out his purse from his pocket and gave alms.

“Thank you, brave man. A thousand thanks. God will repay you a hundredfold,” whispered the man. And he walked away.

“Phew!” breathed Indiana. As a precaution, he had memorized the radium message. He could get rid of it if someone tried to take it. But that didn’t stop him from staying on his guard.

After walking along the banks of the Seine, they found the entrance to the museum and ventured into the depths of the building through

endless corridors and stairs. Their footsteps echoed on the limestone slabs. The immense glass windows filtered a dim, dirty light. The place was not immediately appealing to 13 year old Indiana.

However, in the cold rooms of the dusty museum, Indiana completely forgot about the radioactive vial and the man with the yellow shoes. The mystery of the past was his first passion. Stronger than anything else. At the sight of these wonders, he imagined uncovering sleeping mummies in forgotten temples deep in the heart of virgin forests, exploring tombs buried under the scorching sands of deserts, or diving into the sides of medieval galleons submerged under the seas. Facing the Venus de Milo, he stopped abruptly. The bust with severed arms dated back approximately 4,500 years. It was priceless. "What an amazing adventure it must be to find a statue like this!" exclaimed the ecstatic boy to his father.

"Don't dream too much, Junior. Being an archaeologist is tedious work, lots of research in books, many years of solitary study. All that for very little time spent digging. And even less adventures," replied the professor, evidently enjoying dampening his son's enthusiasm.

Undeterred, the boy thought, "One day, when I'm an archaeologist, I'll make fabulous discoveries. What joy it would be to find the famous lighthouse of Alexandria, one of the seven wonders of the world. Or the remains of Atlantis preserved under the lava of a volcano..." This dream, his father couldn't understand. His father, at the ripe old

age of forty, felt he was far too old to still dream. They were about to enter the rooms reserved for Egyptology when a guard announced the closing.

“Darn it, already!” muttered Indiana.

“I warned you, Junior. In France, we don’t joke about schedules. The French even have a proverb: ‘Before the hour, it’s not the hour. After the hour, it’s not the hour anymore.’ You should meditate on that.” As they were heading towards the exit, they crossed paths with an elderly man with a waxy complexion, and Henry Jones exclaimed, “Professor Mazda! Well, what a happy coincidence!” Completely absorbed in his thoughts, the old man barely turned his head. Then, suddenly, as if his brain had just lit up, he opened his arms wide and rushed towards Henry Jones to embrace him.

“Professor James! How delighted I am to see you again!”

“Not James. Jones. Henry Jones!”

“Apologies, my dear. But where is my mind?”

“Still on your shoulders, thankfully,” thought Indiana as he observed the two men congratulating each other.

“But what brings you to Paris, Doctor Jim?” Henry Jones, who had enough respect for his friend not to take offense, continued: “I’m on vacation, with Junior, my son.”

“Your son! But he’s already a young man. My goodness, how time flies! It reminds me of the good old days. Do you remember, in 1905, on the excavation site...”

“And blah blah blah!” commented Indiana

internally. Apparently, the old man with parchment-like skin was not only absent-minded but also talkative. As they walked towards the museum's exit, he didn't stop talking for a second.

Indiana was starting to regret not spending his vacation with a friend. At this time, what could Hermann, his college buddy who had shared many of his adventures, be doing? With him, he could have acted freely. He imagined Herman and his dad on the beach or in a candy shop. Honestly enjoying themselves, carefree! Whereas with his father...

"Junior! I'm talking to you. Could you respond to me?"

"Huh? What?"

"My old friend Professor Mazda is proposing that I accompany him to the famous Sorbonne University. There's a lecture on the Knights of the Round Table. Would you be interested in coming?" Indiana couldn't help but wrinkle his nose.

"Alright! I get it," continued Henry Jones. "I'll give you some free time. You can finally do as you please this afternoon." Indiana didn't jump into his father's arms to thank him, but the sentiment was there. It was almost 1 o'clock when the boy returned to the hotel. Instead of having lunch in the restaurant, he ordered a snack in his room. Devouring his chicken sandwich with gusto, he flipped through his father's tourist guide. Perhaps he would find some information about the underground tunnels of Paris. Indeed, his intuition had led him in the right direction. On page 232, the word Ossuary caught his attention. Intrigued, he

browsed the guide from pages 230 to 235. They were dedicated to the catacombs. Unique in the world, the catacombs of Paris contain the remains of nearly six million individuals. These bones, originating from several Parisian cemeteries (notably the Cemetery of the Innocents, reserved for children), were grouped together in a part of the city's underground tunnels.

"Rather eerie!" thought Indiana, shivering at the thought of all those skulls and bones piled up. But now, at least, he had an explanation: the radioactive bulb could have been hidden somewhere in the catacombs. All he had to do now was figure out what 4R C88 meant. Lying on his bed with his boots on, Indiana was at this stage of his reflections when someone suddenly burst into his room. Quickly, he sat up, grasped the handle of his whip, and stood firmly on his two legs, ready to defend himself. It was Charles who had entered without knocking!

"Excuse me," said the young man, also surprised by Indiana's aggressive attitude.

"I'm really sorry for being so rude, but I was afraid something had happened to you."

"Something happened?" repeated Indiana. "And why would something happen?"

"Because of this," replied the young waiter, showing a piece of paper. "It's a message that was left for you at the reception."

"The man with the yellow shoes, I bet?"

"No, it was a street kid. He was paid for it. I questioned him, and he gave me this description: a burly guy with handlebar mustaches and yellow



shoes, like those of a wrestler.”

Indiana grabbed the paper Charles was handing him and read: “Kid, mind your own business. Leave the message at the reception, or else you’ll regret it. Signed: Colonel Artüg”

Unfazed, he folded the paper and began to think aloud: “They’re threatening me now. This is getting serious! But they don’t know me; I’m not the type to be intimidated. He also didn’t realize Charles was speaking English at first.”

“That’s true, that whip is really impressive,” replied Charles, leaving Indiana unsure whether he was sincere or mocking. For ten long seconds, they observed each other in silence. Charles had a fine fuzz on his face. Standing a good head taller than Indiana, the boy seemed to have grown too quickly in his outfit, which needed both its legs and sleeves lengthened. He shifted from one foot to the other, as if he didn’t dare ask for something. Was the English an attempt at a tip, perhaps? Indiana searched his pockets. All he had left was some loose French change and a dollar. He handed the dollar to Charles and said “Root for the Philadelphia Athletics for the World Series.”

“No, no, I don’t want money,” grumbled the young waiter, wounded in his pride. Besides I like the Montreal Royals. I was just happy to hear some English from someone my age so I kept my eye on you. I mostly grew up on the border of Quebec and the United States. I’m not even French Canadian, I’m French Acadian. I joke it means I have to work harder to cover my accent at work.”

“Thanks for the save, I didn’t know they had baseball that far north” stammered Indiana, feeling foolish. “What do you do for fun around here?” Pointing to the whip Indy had put back around his waist, Charles timidly asked: “That looks fun, can I try it?”

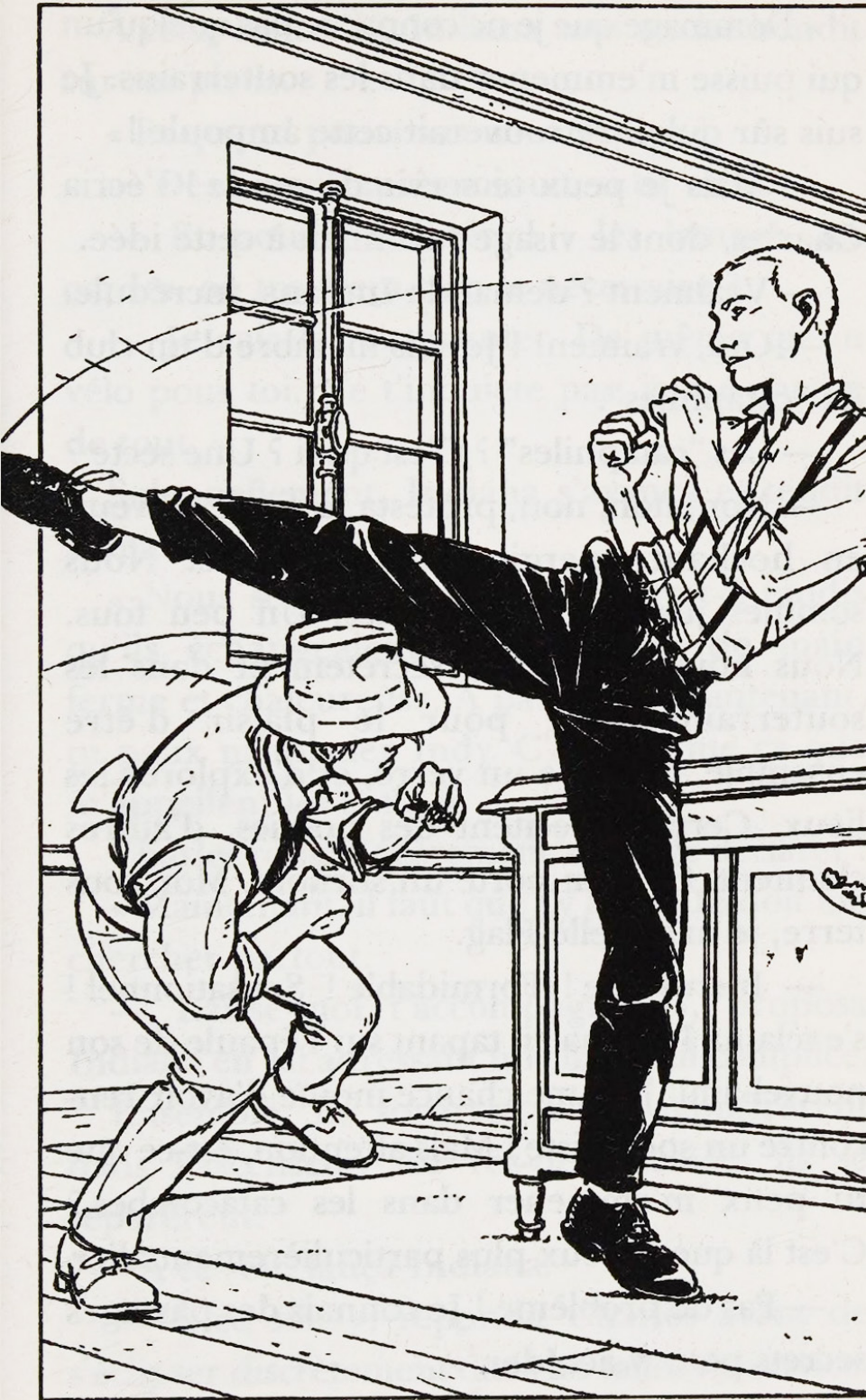
“Of course! It’s really beautiful,” exclaimed Charles, admiringly trying to make the long leather lash crack, without success. Indiana took it back from him. Then, with a sweeping and confident motion, he struck the whip, cutting the head off one of the flowers in a vase.

“You see, you have to give it a good flick of the wrist.”

“A true whipmaster!” exclaimed Charles. “Accept no substitutions! I feel sorry for anyone who gets in your way. I may not know how to use a whip, but I practice savate. You don’t want to mess with me either!” Saying this, he assumed a boxing position, fists clenched in front of his face, as if fighting an invisible opponent.

“Savate?” exclaimed Indiana. “French boxing, if you prefer. In addition to using fists, we’re allowed to use our feet. Like this.” The teenager pivoted on himself. His heel kicked up near Indiana’s nose, which he dodged. If Professor Jones had entered the room two minutes later, he would have witnessed this scene: in the center of the carpet serving as an improvised ring, Charles was obviously proud of what he knew and wanted to share.

“Your left! Keep your guard up! Yes, not bad.” Undoubtedly, Charles knew what he was doing. He



was quick and agile. Indiana was defending himself well too. But he could never touch his opponent, whereas three times, Charles could have landed a decisive blow.

After five minutes, they collapsed onto the bed, sweating. This sports session had relaxed Indiana. He decided to confide in Charles. So, he began to tell him how he had discovered the message. The young Frenchman listened very attentively. Charles shared the story of the Acadian Diaspora. The British drove his family out of the Acadian Islands and Charles's family basically walked across the border to the United States and stopped. He came to Paris to immerse himself in French culture but now missed his English speaking friends. Their conversation meandered back to the vial.

"It's a shame I don't know someone who could take me into the underground tunnels. I'm sure we could find that vial!"

"But I can be your guide!" exclaimed Charles, his face beaming at the idea.

"Really?" asked Indiana, incredulous.

"Yes, really! I'm a member of a 'cataphile' club."

"The 'cataphiles'? What's that? A cult?"

"No, no, no," protested the young waiter, vigorously shaking his head. "We're just enthusiasts. A bit crazy. We meet secretly in the tunnels just for the pleasure of being together, having a drink, and exploring the places. Some recite poetry, others sing. Everyone has a nickname. Underground, I'm called Flag."

“Perfect” exclaimed Indiana, tapping his new friend on the shoulder. “I’m incredibly lucky to have met a specialist! But be careful, can you take me to the catacombs? That’s where I particularly want to go.”

“No problem! I know secret passages to access them.”

At this news, Indiana, all excited, jumped to his feet.

“And when can we go?”

“As soon as tonight after midnight, if you want.”

“And for the equipment: the lamps, the ropes, where will we find what we need?”

“I’ll borrow them. And a bike for you too. Don’t worry, I’ll take care of everything.”

Suddenly serious, Indiana stepped forward and extended his hand to Charles.

“We’re partners,” he declared as they exchanged a firm and warm handshake. “From now on, you can call me Indy. That’s what my friends call me.”

Charles blushed slightly before saying:

“Now, I have to go. They must be looking for me everywhere.”

“Let me accompany you,” proposed Indiana, giving him a complicit wink.

Together, they left and got into the elevator. On the ground floor, they parted ways.

“See you tonight,” said Indiana.

“See you tonight,” replied Charles before discreetly disappearing into the service areas.

Alone in the elevator, Indiana was about to

go back up to the floors when, through a curtain he caught sight of a familiar figure: Héricard! Trying not to attract attention, Indiana approached. Another shadow stood facing Héricard. Much taller and bulkier than him. A shadow with shoes protruding under the curtain. And not just any shoes! Yellow brogues!

Indiana hid behind a curtain. Unfortunately, the two men were speaking too softly for him to understand them.

Yet, intermittently, he heard a few words. "... Professor Jones... his son?... Large sum... Colonel Artüg..."

"They're accomplices," thought Indiana. "Héricard is involved! It's strange though, I didn't think he was courageous enough for this kind of adventure."

The two men, slightly in the background in the dim corridor, took precautions to ensure that no one overheard their conversation. A squad of employees passed by. They immediately stopped talking. Then the dialogue resumed, increasingly animated. The two men seemed to disagree, and the tone was rising.

"You could at least be discreet!" the unknown person intervened in an authoritative tone. And, without another word, he slipped away.

Left alone, Héricard took off his hat, scratched his head, put his hat back on. He pulled on the chain of his large watch, observed the dial for a long time, as if calculating something. Still concealed behind the heavy velvet curtains,



Indiana waited. Suddenly, with his short step, Héricard headed towards the reception desk and asked:

“Has Professor Jones arrived?”

“If you’re looking for my father, he’s been absent all afternoon. However, I’m here. Can I help you?” Indiana announced, scrutinizing Héricard.

“Not exactly,” replied the man, clearing his throat. Indiana’s unexpected arrival had made him very uncomfortable.

“Why exactly did you come, Mr. Héricard? I’d like to shed some light on something. Something about a glowing vial, for example!” Indiana had no idea if radium glowed, he just guessed.

Embarrassed, Héricard nervously twisted the handle of his cane. With little conviction, he protested “I don’t understand! Where are you going with this, you impertinent young man?”

Indiana cut him off “The man with the yellow shoes, the one you were talking to just five minutes ago! He’s a bandit, a criminal. And you’re in cahoots with him!”

“What do you mean?” exploded Héricard, indignant. “You’re accusing me? But I have nothing to do with that man! I don’t know him. I just came to see Professor Jones again about the crypt in the hope of convincing him. The person you’re talking about must have overheard me asking the receptionist if your father was here. He approached me.”

“And he promised you a nice sum of money

if you retrieved the message. Is that it, isn't it? The message? But what message are you talking about? You're crazy, young man." Héricard squawked. His cries attracted two employees who invited him to calm down. On the contrary, he became even more agitated. So much so that he was forcibly escorted to the exit and asked not to return. Before crossing the threshold, he yelled again, furiously: "It's unfair! It's too unfair!"

He seemed sincere. And yet, Indiana suspected him of lying.



## Chapter 6

### In the Belly of Paris

“Midnight at last!” Indiana thought to himself upon hearing the nearby church bells chime. Silence reigned within the slumbering hotel. In the next room, Henry Jones had turned off his light a good quarter hour ago. He must be sleeping. Or so one hoped. Indiana was lying on his bed waiting for Charles to arrive. As they had agreed, Charles would slip a note under his door. That way they wouldn’t risk waking the professor. Minutes passed. A quarter of an hour. Still nothing. Would Charles keep his word? And if he didn’t come? No, impossible! He was the kind of boy you could trust. Indeed, two minutes later, the note appeared. Immediately, Indiana rushed to the door. Gently, he opened it. The corridor was dark. It took his eyes a few seconds to adjust. Standing on the threshold was a strange extraterrestrial figure in work overalls, wearing a helmet topped with a lamp, connected by a hose to some kind of canister fixed at the waist. Indiana hesitated for a moment.

“Well, what’s the matter, are you scared?” It was Charles.

“Scared, no! Just surprised. What’s with the costume? You look like a miner,” Indiana replied in a low voice.

“It’s not a costume. It’s my gear. I’ve brought you the same. You’ll need to change. Follow me.” Dress like this! With overalls and a metal bowl on his head, absolutely not! He would keep his hat and

leather boots. But this wasn't the place to discuss it, so Indiana followed his accomplice without saying a word. Instead of taking the elevator, they took a service staircase that Indiana had never noticed. They descended three floors this way.

"We're getting to the staff locker room," Charles explained, resuming speaking aloud.

"No risk of running into anyone. Apart from the night watchman at the entrance, all the other employees have left. Here, you can get dressed in peace."

"Dressed? But I'm already dressed! We're not going to a costume party."

"You at least need to put on the helmet," Charles insisted. "It's equipped with an acetylene lamp, it's the best way to light up in the underground tunnels."

"Never! I only take off my hat to sleep. And even then, not always."

"Okay! But then, how do you plan on lighting yourself up?"

"Don't you have a normal lamp? One I can hold in my hand?"

"But this lamp is completely normal, Indy. Plus, it's very practical. The advantage with it is that you have your hands free."

"Alright, you're right," Indiana replied. "I'll attach it to my hat."

Under Charles's amused gaze, Indiana tried to attach the lamp to the ribbon of his hat. But after an honest struggle the setup was deemed impossible. Nevertheless, Indiana persisted.

“Excuse me,” Charles interrupted after five minutes, “we should get going. We have a meeting with my ‘cataphile’ friends. And we still have five kilometers to bike.”

“Maybe,” Indiana admitted. “But I’m keeping my hat. You must be able to find me a hurricane lamp.”

“As you wish, but we’ll be late,” grumbled Charles. “Wait for me here, I won’t be long.” Shortly after, the young waiter returned with a hurricane lamp filled with fuel. Satisfied, Indiana thanked him.

“You see,” he explained, “I never going to part with this hat. It brings me luck. In the five months I’ve had it I’ve already had all sorts of adventures.”

“Perhaps! But that’s no reason, you’re really stubborn when you set your mind to it.”

“I could swear I’m hearing my father,” Indiana replied. And both of them burst out laughing.

Five minutes later, the boys were riding at a good pace on heavy, creaking bicycles that Charles had borrowed. Two old, patched-up models, with hard seats that burned the rear, wobbly wheels that groaned with each turn, and brakes in such poor condition that it was better to put your feet down to stop.

However, that didn’t stop the boys from racing. After a while, they had to slow down, though, because the poor lighting of their bikes and the wet road made riding difficult. Nevertheless, they didn’t dawdle. At this late hour of the night, one didn’t feel

safe in the deserted, dark streets.

Soon, they reached their meeting place. Charles, who was riding in front, got off his bike.

“Here we are,” he said, pointing to an empty lot bordered by a wooden fence.

In the darkness, no buildings could be seen, except for a half-ruined building outlined against the sky.

“What a sinister place!” Indiana remarked.

“You’re right, let’s not linger, it’s a real danger zone.”

They hid their bikes amidst a pile of brambles and followed a winding path to the dilapidated building.

“We’re on the territory of the Shredders,” Charles continued. “A gang of thugs who rob everyone they meet. They consider anything they find in their territory to be theirs”

“Let them come a little closer!” Indiana exclaimed, grabbing his whip.

“It won’t be necessary,” Charles replied as they entered the ruin. “We’ve arrived.” Charles whistled a long note, then two shorter ones. Behind a low wall, two heads appeared in the dim light of a lamp. They looked like puppets stepping onto a stage.

“Ah! There you are at last!”

“Finally, about time!”

“We were delayed by a puncture,” Charles lied, not wanting to blame Indiana for lingering over a silly hat issue.

“Something else then,” said one of the two, a tall, skinny boy who stood up and shook Indiana’s hand.

Charles made the introductions. The tall one, about sixteen years old, had small dark eyes, long pointed ears, and a sardonic mouth. He was nicknamed Diabolo. The other, younger, maybe fourteen, was plump. His face lit up with a dazzling smile.

“Hey,” he said, shaking Indiana’s hand, “I’m Chicoré. And you?”

“Indiana or Indy, if you prefer.”

“Weird name. Where are you from?”

“The United States of America.”

“Wow!” both boys exclaimed. “An American.”

“You’re so lucky to travel like that. I’ve never even been to the seaside.”

“Your hat is really cool. Can I borrow it?”

The two boys circled around Indiana like butterflies drawn to a flower and its pollen.

“Hey, guys!” Charles interrupted. “We’re not here to chat. Anything to report in the area?”

Immediately, the two curious boys stopped their antics. Almost at attention, Diabolo replied, “All quiet. We haven’t seen anyone. Isn’t that right, Chicoré?”

“Absolutely no one! Not the quarry inspectors or the Shredders.”

“The coast is clear, then,” declared Charles. “We can go.” He then took the lead. The four boys followed in single file along the path, this helped amidst the initial brambles and nettles. Indiana was second. Behind him, Chicoré and Diabolo followed.

They walked silently like wolves until they reached a stone hut. There, Charles pushed open a

rickety door. His headlamp illuminated the room. At the back, a gaping hole appeared.

It was a descent shaft fitted with a ladder fixed to the wall. With caution, they leaned over the void: their lamps, all together, were not enough to illuminate the bottom.

“It looks awfully deep,” remarked Indiana.

“About twenty-five meters,” explained Charles.

“It’s better not to fall,” continued Diabolo.

“Otherwise, you’ll squash like a pancake,” Chicoré finished.

“From now on, things get serious. And first of all, we need to prepare.”

Charles pulled a cork from his pocket and set it on fire. The cork burned poorly, emitting thick black smoke. After extinguishing it, and facing Indiana’s questioning look, the teenager explained:

“We blacken our faces and hands before descending. It’s the best way to blend into the darkness.” Each in turn rubbed themselves with the burnt cork. Indiana went last. Smearing himself like this kind of reminded him of Indian war paint. Indy gulped, but one of the last times he painted his face he ended up property in a slave auction.

While putting the finishing touches to his makeup, Charles gave him his final instructions.

“From this point, we’re in a restricted area. It’s best to avoid getting caught by the quarry inspectors. We can also get trapped by the Shredders. In that case, we split up, everyone for themselves.”

“And how do we find each other again?”  
asked Indiana.

“Each one leaves their mark on the walls, underlined with an arrow to indicate their direction. With chalk, like this one. Take it! It might come in handy. And remember: I don’t sign as Charles, but as Flag.”

“Well, then, I’ll go by Indy.”

“Agreed, Indy,” replied Charles, whose smeared face looked diabolical. And with these words, he stepped over the edge of the shaft and disappeared into the darkness.

A few seconds later, Indiana began his descent. To keep his hands free, he had to hold the lamp handle between his teeth. Obviously, it was much less practical than a lamp fixed to a helmet. But the agile boy had gotten out of a thousand more dangerous situations.

A cold breath rose from the shaft. The metal rungs of the ladder were rusty in places. Debris fell regularly as it was dislodged by Diabolo and Chicoré. It was better not to look up to avoid getting debris in the eyes. Indiana had descended halfway without incident when suddenly, the brim of his Weston hat caught on one of the rungs.

“Disaster!” exclaimed the boy, watching his precious hat begin a swirling fall before disappearing into the darkness. Shortly after, Indiana reached the bottom of the ladder, in a narrow gallery.

Without a word, Charles handed him back the felt hat he had picked up. He then whispered “Do they have a hat trick in baseball like they do in

cricket?" His smile said more than his words.

Before their two accomplices joined them Charles briefly outlined his plan to Indiana:

"First, the four of us will go to La Plage. Other 'cataphile' friends are waiting for us there."

"Okay," nodded Indiana, busy reshaping his hat dented by the fall.

"Then, you and I will go alone into the catacombs. For safety, we'll inform Diabolo and Chicoré. They'll come to help us if needed." Charles had barely finished his sentence when Diabolo landed between them, immediately followed by Chicoré.

Immediately, the four boys, guided by Charles, set off.

Like an anthill from the queen the underground galleries stretched in all directions, intersecting, ascending, descending, and sometimes ending in dead ends. Carved into the living rock, sometimes supported by small masonry pillars, they offered no landmarks for someone like Indiana, exploring them for the first time.

"I wonder how anyone can find their way when they get lost. It's worse than a labyrinth," thought Indiana as they walked single file for a good quarter of an hour.

"Did we not already pass through here?" he asked, convinced they were lost.

"Don't worry," replied Charles, continuing to move forward. "I know these tunnels like the back of my hand. Right, guys?"

"Sure, with Charles, we've never gotten lost,"



agreed Chicoré.

“Absolutely sure!” repeated Diabolo, like a parrot.

Soon, they arrived in a damper area. Drops fell from the ceiling. Channels streamed across the floor. The soil, more crumbly, formed piles. Further on, blocks had fallen. Progress became more difficult. They even had to crawl through a much narrower passage.

“Careful,” warned Charles. “We shouldn’t linger in this area, it’s rather dangerous.”

Hurrying, the four boys overcame the obstacles without difficulty. Regardless, it took them another good quarter of an hour to reach their destination. Indy thought about his dad waking up.

Suddenly, at a crossroads, they emerged into a vaulted room that looked like a prehistoric cave.

“Here we are, Indy. This is La Plage,” exclaimed Charles.

“The beach? But where’s the sea?” joked Indiana.

“It went away with the sun,” replied Charles, mischievously.

“What are you talking about? There’s never been a sea around here,” retorted Chicoré.

“And even less sun,” added Diabolo.

Indiana and his friend laughed heartily. Without knowing why, Diabolo and Chicoré imitated them.

“Let’s be serious,” interrupted Charles. “We didn’t come here for a swim. Besides, this place is called La Plage, but it might as well be called The Pool.”

I would have rather said “The Duck Pond,”

corrected Indiana as he observed the underground water expanse, the color of olive mash, in front of which they had stopped. On the other bank, voices rose accompanied by moving silhouettes.

“Hey there, pals, we’re here!” shouted Chicoré, waving his hand.

“Come quickly,” replied a voice. “We’ve been waiting for you.”

Having circumvented the water’s edge around the cave, they were greeted by a group of unusual characters. Some were masked, others had blackened faces. But the most eccentric were the capes or lace shirts some of them were wearing.

“What a strange gathering,” thought Indiana as Charles introduced him to one of the “cataphiles” who seemed to be the leader of the group.

“Let’s light the candles,” he decided. “the party can begin.”

Shortly after, the yellow flames of a forest of candles arranged in a semicircle reflected on the water’s surface. A strange and magical setting. In the center, a campfire had been lit. It spewed columns of yellow embers. People put some of the candles on plates and floated them on the water.

The “cataphiles” settled all around, some sitting on the ground, others on makeshift seats. Bags of provisions were opened: big loaves of bread, ham, pâté. A delicious smell wafted from all this food, making one’s mouth water.

Indiana gladly accepted a succulent sandwich. It was 2 o’clock in the morning. Dinner was far away. And all these efforts had made him hungry.

“Enjoy your meal,” Chicoré said, staying with Indiana as Charles had walked away without saying anything.

“Thanks,” replied Indiana as he swallowed his bite.

“You’re welcome.”

“Do you know where Charles is?” Indy asked.

“No idea. He just said he’d be back in about half an hour.”

“I hope he hasn’t forgotten our business,” thought Indiana, who was starting to find the time long. He was socializing through the group and spotted a horizontal shape a bit apart in the darkness. He approached, curious if it was his friend. Was it Charles? Someone was lying in a hammock. Charles had worked all day.

He approached even more. It was indeed his friend, comfortably settled, fast asleep. The nerve!

Without mercy, Indiana gave him a vigorous shake.

“Get up, you lazybones. We’re certainly not going to find the vial by snoring!”

Charles barely moved. In a sigh of contentment, he emitted just a sort of whistle and seemed to sink even deeper into sleep.

At that moment Indy thought he heard what sounded like a stampede in a cave. The noise didn’t make sense, but then he saw the assembly of “Cataphiles” immediately disperse in a confused uproar. Cries came from all sides:

“Alert! Watch out!”

“The Shredders!”

“Every man for himself!”

“Charles! Charles! Wake up!” shouted Indiana, shaking the young server harder than the first time.

“Huh? What? What’s happening?” mumbled the sleeper, suddenly opening his eyes.

“Quick, they’re coming...”

“Who?” asked Charles lazily, yawning. Indiana didn’t have time to reply. A dozen masked individuals had appeared. Armed with long sticks, they were shouting wildly as they chased the panicked “cataphiles.” It was chaos. Fortunately, Indiana and his friend were shielded by the protective darkness.

“Hurry! Hurry!” whispered Charles, suddenly awakened. With his whip in hand, Indiana prepared to defend himself.

“The first one who comes close, I’ll...”

“Forget it, Indy. We don’t stand a chance. They’re too dangerous. Come on! Let’s get out of here before they spot us.” Charles pulled Indiana by the sleeve. In the darkness of a narrow passage, they blindly covered about fifty meters before stopping and waiting silently. Sounds of fighting and running continued to reach them from afar. It was a while before calm returned. “I think we’ve escaped them,” Charles finally whispered as he lit his lamp.

Error! Two Shredders were lurking in the darkness. Immediately, the two friends fled. Indiana, who had lost his lamp in the chaos, followed Charles as closely as he could. Gradually, the pursuers lost ground. The two boys were about to outdistance them when the tunnel ceiling suddenly lowered. Indiana instinctively ducked, but a little too late: his

hat caught on a protrusion and fell. Indiana couldn't leave his beloved Weston behind. Impossible! Especially with the message inside. He retraced his steps. While Charles continued his run and moved away, Indiana found himself gradually plunged into complete darkness.

"They might not have noticed me," the boy hoped as he picked up his hat. And he instinctively slipped into a recess. There, in a kind of small basin filled with cold water that instantly soaked his boots, he huddled. The two dim halos of the lamps approached. Five meters. Three, two, one. The pursuers, in deep conversation, passed by Indiana, who held his breath. He wished he could be as small as a frog. Cowering at the bottom of the water. He felt like their passage lasted an eternity.

But, phew! they moved away without seeing him, too busy discussing: "Darn! They bolted faster than rabbits," said one.

"Good grief, yes! That darn kid escaped again." That voice, Indiana knew it. It was the one from the stranger with the yellow boots!

"Doggone it, it's getting dangerous! That rascal must have made an alliance with the Shredders," Indy thought. "I'm really in the lion's den." Indiana remained on alert for a few moments. Paralyzed by the icy water, he couldn't stop his teeth from chattering. Finally, unable to stand it any longer, he emerged from his hiding place.

"First thing, I'm going to take off my boots and socks. If I don't want to catch a cold, I absolutely need to dry my feet," he thought.

In the darkness, the operation took him a good ten minutes. Then he put his shoes back on. Around him, there was a heavy silence. Fortunately, he had a lighter in his pocket. He lit it. The faint glow didn't even pierce the darkness. He couldn't even see further than the tip of his feet. Yet, he had to move to warm up.

He decided to backtrack. At the first intersection, he lit his lighter, pondered, then finally chose a direction at random. Fumbling, he walked until he reached a star-shaped intersection. Had they passed through here? He couldn't remember. They had turned right, left several times without him having time to register anything. At present, he was alone in the dark. Lost.

He retraced his steps back to his initial hiding spot. The best thing was to wait patiently.

Charles would eventually find him. He had to believe that.

## Chapter 7:

### Shins, femurs, and shoulder blades.

Indiana had never liked waiting. He preferred running, climbing, crawling, pedaling, swimming, jumping, fighting. In short, exerting himself until he was completely exhausted was fun to him. But asking him to stand still like a leek in the middle of a flowerbed, well, no! That was worse than anything.

Yet, alone in this dark tunnel he had nothing else to do. He pulled up his collar, buttoned his jacket to keep warm, and waited, trying to control his anxiety. As an old Hindu sage had told him during one of his many travels, all he had to do was to breathe very deeply, empty his mind of all thoughts, and forget what was around him.

“Easy for him to say,” thought Indiana, who could perceive the slightest noises in the silence. The trickles of water along the walls. The drops falling from the ceiling. The nibbling and movements of little creatures. The cracking of the crumbling stone. All of this was amplified. One would think the tunnel was inhabited by a bustling and invisible population.

Spiders, termites, centipedes, cockroaches, rats, mice, some sort of lizards... perhaps snakes! Yes, snakes! Thousands of snakes intertwined with each other, wriggling, hissing. What a horrible nightmare!

Indiana jerked awake. He must have dozed off without realizing it. Yet his heart was racing. He swallowed hard.

“I’d be better off in a nice warm and

comfortable bed,” he thought, thinking of the hotel where his father must be sound asleep. A multitude of questions besieged him. What would he do if Charles didn’t come back? How would he get out of this rat hole? What would happen if he didn’t return to the hotel before dawn? But, in a surge of pride, he suddenly got angry. “I’ve already escaped from the clutches of far more dangerous characters than this Colonel Artüg. I’m not called Indiana Jones for nothing, damn it!” He paced back and forth, gripping the handle of his whip when a glimmer pierced the darkness at the end of the tunnel. Who was coming?

For safety, Indiana had to reluctantly retreat back into his hiding spot. The water was still icy cold, but at least here, he was invisible.

As the light approached, it cast eerie shadows stretching across the walls. Soon, it was close enough for him to recognize the man with the yellow shoes and the Shredder. But they weren’t alone! Indiana held his breath and didn’t move a muscle. They had caught Charles! A scarf gagged the young waiter, whom they were pushing ahead of them without mercy.

“That damn kid escaped us again,” cursed the man with the yellow shoes. “Colonel Artüg will be furious.”

“Don’t worry, Kronstadt! We’ll eventually find him,” reassured the Shredder.

Charles rebelled and retorted sharply, “Indy is much smarter than you think.”

“He may be smart, but he’s trapped like a rat.



Ah! Ah! Ah!” chuckled Kronstadt. “Sure! He’s now a prisoner in the underground. He’ll eventually want to come out. And then, we’ll pounce on him.”

“Disaster!” thought Indiana. It was something he hadn’t considered. The underground was closing in like a trap. Unless...

He still had a chance. He waited for his enemies to move a little further away, and then, in one swift motion, like a panther pouncing on its prey, he leaped.

“Not so fast, scoundrels!”

Kronstadt and his accomplice spun around. Surprise widened their eyes like marbles. Before they could react, Indiana snapped his whip. The long lash wrapped around Kronstadt’s ankles, causing him to lose his balance and nose-dive. In his fall, his lamp shattered. The oil spilled onto the ground and caught fire.

Taking advantage of the element of surprise, the prisoner pivoted on one leg, while with the other, he kicked the Shredder in the stomach.

Doubled over in pain, the Shredder fell to his knees, gasping for breath. Charles jumped on him, grabbed his arm with both hands, and twisted it.

“Yah! Ouch!” cried the thug.

Charles ripped off the hood covering his face. The Shredder had a small weasel-like nose and long, stringy hair. Grimaces of pain contorted his half-toothless mouth.

Meanwhile, Indiana had jumped astride Kronstadt’s back to immobilize him. But Kronstadt, much stronger than Indiana, rolled to the side and



managed to free himself. He was about to gain the upper hand when a portion of his jacket, soaked in oil, ignited. Quickly, the fire spread to the entire jacket, emitting thick smoke.

The man, soon turned into a living torch, screamed. Spinning around in panic, he tried to remove his flaming jacket.

Finally, he threw the coat to the ground and trampled it like it was his enemy, like a creature of the Devil dancing amidst the flames.

“What a shame for those beautiful yellow shoes,” Indiana quipped, who had escaped the fire and stood at a respectable distance. Engrossed in his firefighting task, Kronstadt responded with a grunt worthy of a Cro-Magnon man. Once the fire was extinguished, he faced Indiana and Charles, who still held the Shredder down. The latter was mad with anger, his eyes red and bulging. Indiana raised his whip and brought it down forcefully. The lash cracked just millimeters away from Kronstadt’s legs.

“Don’t move, you bandit! Otherwise, I’ll aim more accurately.” And to show he wasn’t joking, Indiana cracked his whip again, this time dangerously close to Kronstadt’s singed whiskers. He looked pitiful. Hair combed as if with a firecracker, clothes torn, and shoes charred by the fire.

He took three steps back and, casting a dark glance at Indiana, shouted, “Alright, kid! You’ve scored a point. But you haven’t won the game. Believe me, we’ll meet again!” With legs apart and a hand on his hip, Indiana retorted defiantly, “I doubt it!”

“Yes, yes, you little brat, we’ll meet again. I know for sure where Curie’s vial is hidden,” sneered the brute.

“Liar! You’re bluffing!” Indiana countered.

“No, I’m not bluffing. I searched the area, but found nothing without the code. And I’m the only one who knows the code. Only me! You’ll have to torture me to learn it.”

“Not so sure!” the brute roared again. “I have more than one trick up my sleeve. Consider it a warning.” Then, with a hyena-like snicker, he disappeared into the dark tunnel.

“Don’t leave me, Kronstadt,” the Shredder cried out, still trying to free himself. But Charles held him in an iron grip. While Indiana tied his feet and hands, he struggled weakly, pleading, “Please! Please! Don’t hurt me.”

“It depends on you,” Indiana retorted. “If you answer our questions nicely, I won’t use my whip.”

“As you wish,” the Shredder agreed.

“Tell us what you know about that scoundrel Kronstadt and his accomplice, Colonel Artüg,” Charles demanded, shaking him.

“I don’t know anything,” the teenager protested. “Let me go, I don’t know anything.”

“Okay, I’ll ask my whip to make you talk. It’s itching to,” Indiana threatened, showing his formidable weapon.

“No, no, no! Please, mercy!” Fear whitened his clenched lips. Indiana and Charles, leaning over him, awaited the words that seemed difficult to come.

“So, what’s the deal?” Charles snapped, grabbing him by the collar.

“Well, well,” stammered the shaggy-haired teenager. “This afternoon, Kronstadt came to see us in our hideout. He needed our help to find a treasure.”

“A treasure!” exclaimed Indy.

“Yes, a treasure. According to him, a young American tourist stole his map with all the directions to find it.”

“The young tourist is me!”

“Yes, probably,” the Shredder said with puppy dog eyes. “He promised us a handsome reward if we helped him.”

Indiana couldn’t help but burst into laughter. “Haha! That’s the best! So, according to him, I’m the thief!”

“That’s what Kronstadt said. He also believes that the treasure is somewhere in the catacombs, but he’s not sure.”

Indiana and Charles exchanged knowing looks. It was better not to speak in front of the Shredder. Once free, he might repeat everything. “In the catacombs, are you sure?” Charles asked again.

“Absolutely! He even said he would set a trap for you there.”

“Impossible!” Charles interrupted. “The catacombs are completely inaccessible and guarded day and night by Inspector de Bury’s teams.”

“Are you sure?” Indy worried.

“Not a shadow of doubt. And de Bury isn’t one to joke around.”



“I know, I’ve met him before,” Indy replied, recalling the vulture-like face of the Inspector General of the quarries. “But under these conditions, how will we penetrate them?”

“Don’t worry, I have my plan,” Charles whispered, winking knowingly at Indy.

“Alright, I trust you. Still, that’s no reason to waste time. Let’s go!”

After thoroughly binding and gagging the Shredder the two friends headed for the catacombs. The race against Kronstadt had begun. Charles led the way. He knew the network of tunnels down to the smallest detail. Including the secret passages. In the darkness, the galleries all looked the same: gloomy, damp, muddy, and dark.

Very cautiously, Charles stopped at every intersection to make sure the coast was clear. Regularly, he drew his recognition sign on the stone walls: a sort of cross with an arrow indicating their direction.

“Don’t forget that I warned Diabolo and Chicoré,” he explained to Indiana. “If we haven’t reappeared by dawn, they’ll come looking for us. Thanks to these marks, they’ll be able to find us easily.”

Indeed, Indiana had every reason to be glad he had met such an efficient and organized adventure companion. After a short fifteen-minute walk, at the top of a staircase they had just climbed, a wall blocked their path.

“We’re stuck!” cursed Indiana. “I’ve had enough of these damned tunnels.”

Are we still far from the catacombs?

No need to get worked up,” Charles calmed him down. “It’s close by. The only problem is the walls. If we were wall-walkers, we would have been there in five minutes.”

“But the thing is, we can’t walk through walls! So, what do you plan to do?”

“Exactly, I plan to walk through walls.”

“Are you kidding me?”

“Not at all. Here, look!” Charles directed the beam of his lamp towards the ceiling. Indiana looked up. Several layers of spider webs formed a sort of curtain.

“Great!” exclaimed Indiana sarcastically. “I don’t see the connection with these darn hairy creatures.”

Charles chuckled and replied, “No, Indy, you’ve got it all wrong. Take a good look. There’s an opening up there. Just big enough to squeeze through when you’re as slim as you and I. We just need to climb up to reach it.”

“Wait! Let me do it,” Indiana said, holding back his friend who was already starting to climb. “This little piece of wall isn’t going to impress me.” And the fearless boy, true to his reputation, began to climb. Although slippery, the stones offered fairly good grips. Indiana quickly ascended to the passage, hidden behind several layers of spider webs. Disgusted, Indy plunged a hesitant hand into it. Discontented spiders scurried in all directions. Balancing on tiptoes, barely held by his fingertips, he had to clean it three times before everything was clear. “It’s been a while since this place was cleaned,”

he grumbled.

“At least, we can be sure that Kronstadt didn’t pass here before us,” Charles replied. With that, having drawn his sign on the rocky wall, he began to climb up as well.

Shortly after, they found themselves at the entrance of the duct. It was so narrow that they had to crawl on their elbows and knees to move through it. Ten meters further, they arrived beneath a cast-iron grate. They had to join forces to lift it. It weighed at least fifty kilograms. “Be careful! This is not the time to get injured,” Charles warned.

“I can’t believe it! I feel like I’m hearing my father!” Indy exclaimed.

“Doubtful! At this hour, Professor Jones is snug in his bed. He does not strike me as a man who would ever get this dirty”

“You’re right. If he saw us, he’d think it was a nightmare,” Indiana replied, wiping his hands covered in a foul-smelling slime. And both burst into laughter. Once the grate was moved, they squeezed through one after the other into a new tunnel. A canal was dug in its center. Water flowed in it, on the surface of which floated garbage. A terrible smell of decay emanated from it.

“Yuck! It stinks like a dead rat!” Indiana complained, holding his nose.

“You can say that again. It doesn’t smell like roses,” Charles agreed, quickening his pace.

Holding their breath, they hurried along the sidewalk bordering the canal. After barely twenty-five meters, they found another cast-iron plate,



which they lifted together once again. Once again, Charles took care to draw his mark on the ground. Five minutes later, they reached a new underground cavity, completely dark. Charles had turned off his lamp. They remained in the dark and in silence for a good minute. Nothing. No sign of human presence.

“You see,” Charles whispered, “everything is calm.”

“Yet, I’m wary. But tell me, where exactly are we?”

“In one of the many rooms of the catacombs,” Charles explained, lighting his lamp again.

“Amazing, you’re a first-class guide!” Indiana congratulated. “I have to admit that without you, I would never have been able to get here. But where are the famous bones? I expected to see them everywhere.”

Instead of answering, Charles directed the beam of his lamp towards a dark corner. A heap of bones, tibias, femurs, shoulder blades, and even skulls appeared! Hundreds of piled skulls.

“Brrr! What a macabre sight!”

With slightly trembling legs, Indy lifted the brim of his hat and wiped his forehead covered in cold sweat. Charles, on the other hand, seemed surprisingly calm and at ease.

“You haven’t seen everything!” he exclaimed. “Here, this is just a descent shaft where the catacombs employees dump their carts of bones from the surface of the ground. It’s called the Slide of Hell.”

“Very funny humor!”

“Black humor!”

“Well, I’m starting to get in a rather black mood! I’ve had enough of these tunnels, and all I want to do is find this bulb and go back to bed. What are we waiting for?”

With an irony not lost on Indiana, Charles replied, “Right away, boss! At your command, boss! Let’s go, boss! But where are we going, by the way, boss?”

“Good question! You’re right, maybe we should think before we act. Let’s see: what do you think 4R C88 could mean?”

“I have no idea. But we’ll surely find the solution to the code by searching.” Shortly after, the two boys emerged into a large vaulted room, like those seen in churches or temples. In the center stood an altar topped with a cross on which shone a copper plate bearing funerary inscriptions. Two candelabras in the shape of trees surrounded it. Nearby, under pillars adorned with funerary decorations, were three sarcophagi.

“Here, this is the main hall,” Charles whispered while sweeping the beam of his lamp from one wall to another. “It’s called the Antechamber of the Dead.”

Above a door, Indiana could decipher this inscription:

“Oh, you, visitor of these places, abandon all hope. Here, death reigns as an absolute master.”

“Getting merrier and merrier,” he grumbled to himself under his breath. “The atmosphere is as gloomy as in the dungeons of a Scottish castle.”

“What are you saying?” Charles asked after lighting the oil lamps that served to illuminate the area.

“I was saying that I don’t believe in ghosts or spirits. Fortunately, otherwise I might expect one to appear at any moment. Why not the Devil himself while we’re at it?”

“In any case, I don’t intend to linger here!” Charles faced Indy and, striking a theatrical pose, asked, “Black humor?”

“Exactly,” Indiana replied, with an air of detachment.

“Then you’re the most astonishing guy I’ve ever met! Usually, everyone who comes down here for the first time is scared to death. And you, you joke around as if nothing’s wrong.”

With a smile on his lips, Indiana thanked his friend for the compliment. There was no need to confess that this humor was a way to mask his anxiety. He also didn’t mention that his sixth sense was alerting him to an enemy presence.

“Since you feel like laughing, come see this,” Charles invited, leading him towards a peculiar structure. “Let me introduce you to the Fountain of the Last Ball.”

It was a small circular basin, carved in the shape of a seashell, filled with black water, yet strangely pure. On a sign, Indy did his best to translate:

*Here, death in rhythm Stomps the ground with its heels. She sings, she laughs, she dances. To the tune of an accordion.*

“This is where the souls come to drink,” commented Charles.

“For heaven’s sake, stop telling me stories!” Indiana snapped. “It’s not helping us in our search.”

“You’re right,” Charles replied, looking somewhat sheepish and displeased at being scolded. But Indiana had already focused his attention on a small, low stone structure. At its top was a kind of niche closed by a decorated door. The young adventurer tried to open it.

“Stop, you fool!” Charles exclaimed. “This niche contains an embalmed heart. They say it’s the Heart of Death herself! Don’t touch it, it brings bad luck!”

“Nonsense! You should be ashamed to spread such fairy tales.”

“I assure you, it’s the truth!”

“That’s enough! Let’s go! Anyway, we won’t find the bulb here. I think it’s more likely to be in one of those galleries where the bones are stored.” From the semicircular room, several of these galleries branched off. Indiana chose one and entered, preceded by Charles who was lighting the way.

Within the first few meters, he couldn’t believe his eyes. Walls of bones rose to the ceiling. Neatly arranged, they formed decorative patterns. From top to bottom, there were rows of skulls, then a layer of bones, another row of skulls, another layer of bones. Every meter or so, two tibias formed a cross.



“Impressive!” whispered the young American, frozen in place. “And how long does it go on like this?”

“For kilometers and kilometers.”

“Well, well! If we have to sift through all these bones one by one to find the bulb, it’ll take an eternity!”

Charles was about to reply when a noise interrupted their conversation.

“What’s that?” asked Indiana, rising abruptly. With his hand on the handle of his whip, he stood ready to defend himself.

“Probably rats,” replied Charles.

“Hmm,” murmured Indy skeptically, as a second noise sounded.

Directing his lamp in the direction of the sound, Charles just had time to illuminate a gray mass skimming along the ground. It was indeed a rat, as big as a cat.

“You see!” triumphed Charles. “If I say there’s no one here, there’s no one here.”

“I want to believe you. Yet, I have the unpleasant feeling of being watched.”

“Forget about it! And follow me; maybe we’ll find the solution a little further.”

“Charles, wait! I have an idea about the code. ‘4R’ could mean ‘fourth row,’ and ‘C88’ could mean ‘eighty-eighth skull.’ What do you think?”

“Not bad! Let’s give it a try.”

They retraced their steps to the beginning of the gallery and counted the skulls up to the eighty-eighth. But the hardest part was yet to come: they



had to dislodge the skull.

“Your turn, please, Charles,” Indiana offered.

“I won’t do it.”

“But please, go ahead!”

“No, please, you’re the leader!”

“Alright!” Indiana decided. “Enough with the niceties.”

Grimacing, he reached out his hand, slipping his fingers into the empty eye sockets.

“I hope the rest of the pile won’t collapse,” he muttered to Charles, who watched him with a look of disgust.

“Don’t worry about that! And don’t move, kid. Your time is up this time!”

The light from a torch as powerful as a spotlight blinded the two boys. But there was no doubt about it, it was Kronstadt who had just spoken!

Quick as lightning, Indiana grabbed the skull and threw it without aiming towards the bandit. With a movement of his head, Kronstadt dodged.

Taking advantage of this moment of distraction Indiana grabbed the handle of his whip, but a gunshot rang out. Stones splintered at his feet. Kronstadt had just fired a shot to warn him.

“Do not play smart. Throw that whip on the ground!”

Don’t push it, Indiana. This time, we’re done for,” sighed Charles.

Completely done for!” added Kronstadt as he advanced, holding them at gunpoint. “You, waiter, you’re going to tie up your friend with his whip. And

securely, I'll check."

Pale, Indiana handed his whip to Charles. Obeying the bandit, Charles tied his friend's wrists. When he finished, he had to let Kronstadt tie him up in turn. Then both of them, helpless, watched as the bandit plunged his hand where the radioactive vial was supposed to be.

"There's nothing!" Kronstadt roared, raising his arms to the sky. "Not a single trace of that cursed bulb."

"Hooray for us!" the two boys sarcastically cheered. They hadn't lost the game yet. As long as they were the only ones who knew the code, they still had a chance to find the bulb themselves. A very slim chance.

"Grrr!" growled Kronstadt, showing his teeth. A mask of frustration distorted his face. His jaws were clenched, his eyes red with flashes of anger.

"Don't smile too soon, lads. I'm going to hand you over to Colonel Artüg. Believe me, he'll make you talk."

And turning specifically to Indiana:

"You, my boy, I promise you, he'll make you spill that code!"



## Chapter 8

### Trapped Like Rats

“Move it, you scoundrels!” Obeying Kronstadt’s order thanks to his gun, Indiana and Charles set off.

With their wrists tied, linked together by the whip serving as a rope, they marched behind the man who dragged them like common cattle. A smirk twisted the soft lips of the bandit, revealing yellow teeth under his drooping mustache. The two boys had to follow him into a gallery lower than the others, and even more sinister: from top to bottom, its walls were lined with skulls.

“Why are these skulls so small?” Indiana murmured to Charles.

“They’re children’s skulls. Remains from the Cemetery of the Innocents,” Charles whispered in response.

“Silence!!!” Kronstadt shouted, stopping in front of a thick wooden door reinforced with iron bars. It measured about eighty centimeters in height and sixty centimeters in width.

“Here’s your palace! A real rat hole! Ah! Ah! Ah!” chuckled the man as he removed the heavy metal bar blocking the entrance. Meanwhile, Charles took the opportunity to trace his mark on the floor one last time. Kronstadt grabbed the two boys by the collar. With the strength of his two arms, as thick as tree trunks, he forced them to lean over and gaze into the illuminated depths of the dungeon below them. Disturbed by this unusual light, two

rats escaped from the skulls they were gnawing on, squeaking.

Indiana felt shivers run down his spine from head to toe. A kind of nausea rose in his stomach. With a sideways glance, he observed Charles. He must be feeling the same, but certainly was not showing it. Without saying anything, they turned to the man in the yellow shoes and, in unison, looked at him with deep contempt.

“You’ll see how comfortable my three-star hotel is, my darlings! And then you’ll have company. In addition to the rats, there will be spiders, cockroaches, bedbugs. Charming creatures...” And, savagely, he pushed them inside. The two boys landed face down in the mud of the cell.

“Scum!” yelled Charles as he got on his knees. The ceiling was too low to stand up. Indiana, slightly dazed, got up too. In the crack of the door the bandit’s face, distorted by the play of shadows and lights, took on a diabolical aspect.

“I guess you still haven’t decided to give me the code, you cursed brats!

“-Certainly not!” they replied in unison.

“Well, alright! I’ll come back in two hours with Colonel Artüg. He’ll make you talk. And if that’s not enough, you’ll spend two days and two nights in this hole without food or drink. After that, we’ll see if you haven’t changed your mind!” With a creak on its hinges, the door closed.

Then, to Charles’s great surprise, Indy exclaimed in a pleading voice: “Wait, Kronstadt! Please!” Immediately, the door reopened. The man’s

grim face reappeared.

“Speak, kid, I’m listening. -I don’t want to stay here! I hate rats, and all those bugs. They give me horrible nightmares!” Charles couldn’t believe his ears: he never would have imagined that his friend could be so cowardly. Unless...? Yes, it was a trick! discreetly, Indy had just winked at him.

“Speak, kid. Tell me the code and I’ll set you free,” Kronstadt replied, displaying a broad smile of satisfaction.

“Untie us first!” demanded Indiana.

The man hesitated for a moment before replying: “Come closer.” Crawling, they approached the door, and Kronstadt untied them: “And now, no tricks, the code!”

The face of the young American lit up. His wrists, irritated by the bindings, itched. He massaged them for a long time. At the doorstep their jailer tapped his foot impatiently, pencil in hand, ready to note down the code so as not to forget it. Finally, after clearing his throat, Indiana decided: “G2.”

“G like Gerard?”

“Yes, that’s right.” Lacking paper, he wrote on the palm of his hand.

“Then?”

“LOQ. L like Louis. O like Octave. Q like... Q.” Kronstadt’s handwriting was hesitant. Apparently, he hadn’t gained mastery of the Roman alphabet.

Grunting, he deciphered the signs he had laboriously drawn: “G... 2... L... O... Q...”

“That’s it!” approved Indy, his eyes sparkling

with mischief. Suddenly, Kronstadt's pupils darkened. His face froze. "That's the correct code? You're not lying, I hope!"

Very seriously, Charles came to his friend's rescue: "Lie! You wouldn't dare!"

"Better not, bellowed Kronstadt with his threatening voice. Because if you've been telling me stories, we will tie you upside down!" The moment was right to act. Head down, Indiana charged to slip out of the cell. But the bandit blocked him like a rugby player. "No, no, no! My lad! You're not flying off like that. You'll stay in there until I've verified the code. If it's correct, then I'll set you free... Well, maybe! The colonel will decide." And after pushing the boy back into the cell, he abruptly closed the door. Plunged into darkness, the two companions heard the clang of the iron bar being carefully replaced by the bandit. Then the sound of his footsteps receding.

"Too bad! You almost escaped him," Charles regretted. "But we haven't lost everything," added the triumphant young waiter. "While Kronstadt was dealing with you, I took the opportunity to hide your whip."

"You're brilliant, Charles! Without my whip, I felt completely naked," praised Indiana. He wrapped the strap around his waist twice and continued: "We'll need it. When that idiot realizes I gave him a fake code, he'll be furious."

"Furious, for sure. All we can do now is hope that Chicoré and Diabolo come to rescue us before that, otherwise he'll gouge our eyes out." Almost

immediately after Kronstadt's departure, the rats and all the creatures started to scurry around in the complete darkness of the cell. As long as the two boys were talking, they were safe. But fatigue was starting to weigh heavily. And, though not reassured, they quickly fell asleep. Indiana was awakened by a shape darting between his legs. A rat! Stretching out his hand, he felt the whiskers, the clawed paws, the long flexible tail. What a horror!

How long had they been there? With no reference point, it was impossible to guess. In the profound silence, Charles's snoring had something reassuring about it. How could he sleep? Indiana was busy watching for any signs of animal presence when suddenly, noises echoed in the distance. Footsteps! Who was coming? Kronstadt and Artüg? Chicoré and Diabolo? To be certain, the best course of action was to make themselves known. Crawling, Indiana groped his way toward the door. He held his breath. The footsteps became clearer and clearer.

Then, as loudly as he could, he began to shout while pounding on the door: "Help! Free us! Help!" His cries woke Charles, who immediately joined in. Finally, the characteristic scraping of the iron bar was heard. Then a beam of light blinded them for a few moments.

"Chicoré?" Charles timidly called out.

A deep silence hung before a voice they didn't recognize answered, "Well, young men, what are you doing here?" Indiana immediately recognized the high-pitched, haughty, and cold voice: it was de Bury's!

Relieved but somewhat uncomfortable, the boy stammered, “Um! Um! It’s a bit complicated to explain, inspector. Can we come out?” “But of course, young curious one! I would be delighted to hear your explanations. As you can imagine, I am surprised to find you here. But at least admit that you are lucky that I heard you during my morning rounds.”

“Very lucky,” replied Indiana, annoyed by the inspector’s condescending tone.

“Except that you have entered a strictly forbidden area. Which means I will have to arrest you!” With severity, de Bury fixed them with his black eyes. His face expressed as much kindness as the beak of a scavenger ready to plunge into a carcass. Charles, who was beginning to take the threat seriously, rushed to speak.

“No, inspector! When you learn why we are here, I’m sure you’ll congratulate us.”

“Well, then! I’m listening.” In a few words, Charles summarized how Indiana, having recovered the message and learned of the disappearance of Curie’s radium and had decided to search for it himself. How Kronstadt, the man with the yellow shoes, had caught them just as they were very close to their goal. Moreover, he was supposed to return shortly, accompanied by his boss, Colonel Artüg.

“I understand,” de Bury admitted when Charles finished recounting their misfortunes. “I understand. But with me, you’re no longer at risk. Just give me the code, and I’ll take care of finding the vial myself.”





Hesitant to respond, Charles turned to Indiana: “What do you think we should do?”

Suspicious, the young adventurer pondered for a moment. It bothered him to entrust his secret to this inspector, who seemed like a predatory bird to him. To say that there was no rapport between them would be an understatement. Indiana had immediately disliked him. Yet, in their situation, the best thing they could do was to entrust this code and quietly go to bed. But he didn’t want to stoop so low as to deliver his secret himself.

“Go ahead,” Indiana ordered Charles. “The code is 4R C88. I hope you’ll be smarter than us in figuring out what it means, inspector.”

“Don’t worry about that, my boy,” replied the inspector. As he spoke, he slipped his hand into the inner pocket of his coat. His mouth, relaxed, displayed a strange smile of satisfaction. “Thanks again!” he insisted, brandishing the barrel of a pistol.

“Darn it!” swore Charles.

“For heaven’s sake!” cursed Indiana. “I suspected it! You are Colonel Artüg.”

“Indeed, you impudent little fellow. You can’t win every time.” Consternation! Artüg, alias de Bury, had deceived the two boys. He looked down at them with disdain from his 6’3” height and savored his victory. Now, before setting out to find the ampoule, all he had to do was get rid of the two nuisances. So he turned to the end of the corridor to call out, “Kronstadt! Get over here, I need you!” The man with the yellow shoes, who must have been hiding in the darkness since the beginning of the scene,



trotted over.

“Here I am, coming.”

“Faster, you damn fool!”

“Of course, Colonel. I—”

“Don’t argue! Tie up these two rascals and throw them into the back of this cell. Without food or drink, they won’t last long. After that, the rats will take care of them. They’ll leave only their bones. No one will ever imagine it was them.”

“It won’t go down like that!” exclaimed Indiana. “My father knows exactly where I am. When he sees that I’m missing, he’ll come looking for me.”

“Shut up!” Kronstadt said, slamming his big hand on the boy’s neck. With the other hand, he grabbed Charles. Then he began to tie them together, back to back. Any attempt to free themselves was futile.

Artüg threatened them with his pistol. “Ah! Ah! Ah! You amuse me, kid! We’ll lock you up in the cell and pile up a bunch of skulls in front of the door. No one will ever find you.”

“You’re sick, Colonel! A dangerous lunatic!” exclaimed Indiana.

“You can’t do this! Let us go!” yelled Charles. “No way, brats! You’ve mocked us too much, you deserve a gruesome death.”

Sitting on the ground and tied up like sausages, the two companions raged at themselves for being fooled so foolishly. But they still had a chance to get out of this: Chicoré and Diabolo. Their two “cataphile” friends wouldn’t take long to

rescue them. It was just a matter of patience.

As Kronstadt was about to close the cell door on them, Indiana risked one last question.

“Colonel, may I ask you a favor?”

“What now?”

“Since we’re condemned, you can at least explain to me why you’re so interested in radium?”

“You’re quite curious! But fine! I can grant you that. It will be your last wish as a condemned man.” The colonel adjusted his monocle, raised his chin, and assumed a haughty air.

“Hmm! Hmm! You’re looking at a servant of the great German nation. I’m not a common spy! My mission is of the utmost importance.”

“We have no doubt,” Indiana cut in with a hint of irony.

“Shut up, scoundrel!” Kronstadt ordered, kicking him. “Let the colonel speak! Interrupt a monologue by a graduate of The Gymnasium Carolinum in Osnabrück? Such a typical American”

The colonel displayed a satisfied smile before continuing his explanation:

“In a short while, there will be a new war between France and Germany. A merciless war. To win it, we need to possess the best weapons.”

“I understand,” thought Indiana, recalling the discussion he had had with his father.

“Radium is used in the medical field, to cure cancer, among other things. The powers of this substance must be immense.”

Artüg’s words confirmed what Indy had just suspected:

“According to our scientists’ calculations, radium atoms contain incredible energy. They believe they can build a bomb. An atomic bomb so powerful that just one will be enough to destroy an entire city!”

Nodding from side to side, Artüg listened to himself speak with self-importance. Standing next to him, Kronstadt observed him, dumbfounded.

“They’re insane,” thought Indiana.

“Completely mad.”

“You understand, you little snoops! We’ll be able to destroy Paris with just one bomb. Ah! Ah! Ah! But you won’t be around to see it! Too bad...”

“Of course, colonel. I hope you receive a medal for your excellent work, you and your accomplices.”

“You’re right, kid. It would be only fair to reward a leader like me, intelligent and cunning.”

“Colonel,” protested Kronstadt. “You weren’t alone. I...”

“Shut up, idiot. You’re good for nothing! If I hadn’t been there, the radium vial would have slipped through our fingers!”

Offended, Kronstadt wrinkled his nose and shot a dark look at Artüg. Clearly, the two men didn’t like each other.

Charles understood that Indiana was trying to sow discord between them.

“Come on, chief!” protested Kronstadt.

“You’re being unfair! Without our accomplice working at the Curie Institute, we would never have been able to get our hands on the vial!”

“What’s that? Don’t talk to me about that coward! If he had been more cooperative, there wouldn’t have been so many problems. He would have given us the radium directly. But he preferred to hide it himself in the catacombs and then send us a map with the code so we could retrieve it.”

“If I understand correctly,” added Indiana, “your accomplice risks the death penalty for espionage, and thinks he can remain anonymous.”

“Indeed, kid, you catch on quickly. Unfortunately for you, there’s one thing you haven’t grasped: where the radium is buried.”

“And where is it?” asked Indy arrogantly.

“At the base of a pillar,” replied Artüg. “And we’ll retrieve it while you’re rotting in this rat hole. Ah! Ah! Ah!”

Charles, who hadn’t said anything until now, exclaimed:

“A pillar! Darn it! Why didn’t I think of that? It was so simple! I should have guessed! All the pillars have inscriptions like 4R C88. RC, those are the initials of the engineer’s name. And 88 is the date of its construction.”

“That’s enough now! Enough talk!” cut in the German spy. And addressing Kronstadt, he ordered him to close the door. Permanently!

“Farewell, young snoops! And remember: one should never poke their nose into other people’s business! Take this time to reflect. You’ll have plenty of it, dying of hunger and thirst. Ah! Ah! Ah!”

The door closed with a sharp sound. Like a guillotine.

## Chapter 9

### The Vial in Danger

Charles and Indiana had started looking for a way to cut the rope that bound them back to back. Fumbling in the dark for what seemed like an eternity, they eventually found a stone whose sharp edges had allowed them to free themselves. Now they were free to move, but in total darkness, unsettling and sinister.

“Do you think Chicoré and Diabolo will find us?” Indiana worried.

“I’m sure of it,” Charles replied, “it’s only a matter of minutes. God have mercy on me as a sinner.”

Despite his friend’s reassuring words, Indiana had concerns. The idea of ending up like a rat in a trap didn’t really appeal to his growing sense of self. What an insult to survive what he had and then to die like this.

Why had he gotten himself into such a mess? Already, he could hear his father’s words. “Junior, you’re a hothead. You have no sense of danger. It’s as if you only think about misbehaving and playing the hero! When will you become serious?”

Usually, these moral lessons left him indifferent to the moral. But now, in this damp and dirty cell, the boy began to wonder if his father might be somewhat right. Charles was clearly a Catholic believer. Indy was a little jealous of being that sure of anything.

Then another worry crossed his mind. “What

do you think the time is? I hope the night isn't over yet. If my father is awake and finds out I haven't slept in my bed, he'll be furious!"

Charles struck a match. By the light of the flame, he observed the dial of his pocket watch.

"Four thirty."

"Incredible," exclaimed Indiana. "We've been underground for just over two hours, and yet it feels like an eternity."

"It's normal," replied Charles. "Without daylight, we lose track of time. Unfortunately, time never stops. After a sleepless night, fatigue sets in."

"You're right," agreed Indiana, his eyelids starting to feel heavy. "We need to regain our strength."

"The best thing is for each of us to sleep in turns so we don't miss Diabolo and Chicoré's arrival."

"Good idea," acknowledged Indiana. "But who will sleep first?"

"You," replied Charles. "I managed to take a little nap in my hammock earlier at La Plage. I'm more rested than you."

Indiana didn't have the strength to argue with this wise decision. By the light of a second match that Charles had struck, he crawled on all fours and collapsed onto the thick layer of straw at the bottom of the cell.

Despite his fatigue, sleep was slow to come. Indy was too agitated. Tense. His whole body was tingling, his head buzzing. He always could imagine a little something crawling on his skin. Half-

conscious, he felt something strange at the end of his shoe. He jerked and grumbled in Charles's direction.

"Why are you scratching my feet?"

"Me, scratching your feet? Are you kidding?"

"No, I'm not kidding! It's even worse than that, I feel like teeth are gnawing at my boots!"

"In my opinion, you're going mad."

"No, no, not at all! It's crawling up on me! Ahh! It's a rat! I can feel it! A big rat! Filth!"

Charles struck another match.

Around them, dozens of small round eyes gleamed. Gray, fleeting shapes moved. Round ears, tails like string, stiff whiskers, pointed snouts: they were indeed rats. A small army of dreadful rats besieged them.

Waving their arms and legs, Indiana tried to chase them away. But the creatures, not scared in the slightest, only retreated out of reach. And there, they waited.

"Where are these damn rats coming from? They're watching us, licking their chops!"

"If I catch the one that slashed my boot leather, I'll make mincemeat out of it!"

Horried, the boys drew closer to each other. They were now on their tenth burnt match. At this rate, they would soon have none left. Then, encouraged by the darkness, the rats would pounce on them.

"We'll make a torch," decided Indiana, grabbing a handful of straw and twisting it tightly. All that was left was to set it on fire.

Holding the torch at arm's length, Indiana

advanced towards the rats, who immediately backed away. Indiana redoubled his energy. With quick gestures, he waved his improvised weapon while shouting.

Finally, the creatures scattered and disappeared into their holes. Only an old specimen with torn ears had not moved. Sniffing the air with its snout up, lips curled, it sniffed in the direction of the two boys. Furious, Indiana approached the torch to within ten centimeters of the animal, but it didn't move. It became even more aggressive in the flickering light.

"Will you leave, you nasty creature! If you stay, I'll roast you like an Andouille sausage!"

"Leave him," exclaimed Charles. "He has white eyes, he's probably blind. Stop, Indiana! Someone's coming. Look at the light under the door." Charles had become friendlier with the rats around his restaurant than the owners would have liked. Charles has a whole hierarchy of imagined roles for the ones he liked. The rats did not look down on him like he was a second class Frenchmen.

They did not make fun of his accent which his co-workers called both old fashioned and farm-like. Scores of men joining up for the French military had made a waiter job possible for an immigrant like Charles. However manners reflecting his hardscrabble roots in rural upstate New York was a reason they had originally assigned him to the Jones' table. He had milked so many cows for his fare to Paris, little rats were not going to stop him.

Indy listened to Charles' advice. Indiana



immediately forgot about the fearless old rat.  
Indy hated that he was starting to respect the rat?  
What the hell! Why are their hands so human like?  
Horrible!

In perfect unison, the two boys rushed to the door and pounded while shouting:

“Hey! Hey! We’re here! Help, come rescue us.”

The footsteps and voices drew closer. The light increased. Finally, there was a response:

“Where are you?”

It was Chicoré.

“We’re here,” replied Charles, pounding harder. “They locked us in a tiny cell.”

“Where? We can’t find the door!”

“They hid it behind a pile of bones. Hurry, we’re being attacked by rats.”

“Hold on, guys, we’re coming.”

The sound of bones and skulls being moved by Chicoré and Diabolo was both sinister and... reassuring. Indy had listened to hundreds drown in the Titanic while being happy he survived. This was one of many moments where death was starting to mean something different to him.

Finally, the door opened, letting in a comforting light. Indiana’s face froze in confusion. Diabolo and Chicoré were not alone. A little man with a protruding belly accompanied them. Bowler hat, frock coat, headlamp, cane, backpack, canteen – he was equipped as if for an expedition to the ends of the earth.

Despite the blinding light, Indiana immediately recognized this figure: it was Héricard!

What was the amateur archaeologist doing here? Strange! Even more strange Héricard seemed competent.

“Surprising surprise!” exclaimed Indiana.

“Why are you following me like this?”

“That’s enough! Now it’s my turn to ask the questions! Know, my young friend, that I am a police inspector.”

Héricard, a police inspector? Indiana couldn’t believe it. Indy was too tired to prevent himself from making a face and emitting a scoff. This spoke volumes to the investigator, Indy had forgotten that Héricard was actually smart.

“First things first, I won’t tolerate your nonsense now you know who I am.”

Indiana blushed, half in shame, half in anger.

“I’ve been on Artüg’s trail for a long time,” Héricard continued. “And you almost ruined months of work.”

“But then, if you’re not an amateur archaeologist, why did you come to tell my father this story about the crypt? Why involve him at all?”

“I needed an excuse to get close to de Bury. I thought with a great scholar like Professor Jones, he would be much less suspicious.”

“I understand,” admitted Indy. “You wanted to use us.”

“Exactly. It is not like an Archaeologist’s work is going anywhere. Unfortunately, you almost sabotaged my work.”

Héricard took a breath.

“Tonight, I was watching him when his

accomplice came to fetch him. I started following them. Unfortunately, a regrettable incident made me lose their trail!...”

“I’m not surprised,” thought Indiana, “they must have shaken him off. Héricard’s as fast as a snail.”

“...and then, by a stroke of luck, I ran into your friends.”

Charles, Chicoré, and Diabolo watched the conversation from a distance. They had opened a canteen and were drinking one after the other. Charles handed the canteen to Indiana.

The boy was thirsty. A little lemonade would quench his thirst! He put the mouth of the canteen to his lips and drank: it was wine! He wasn’t used to drinking it. He hesitated, then swallowed two sips anyway.

“It won’t make you sick,” Chicoré declared after wiping his lips with his sleeve.

“I would have preferred milk,” retorted Indiana.

“Milk! That’s for babies!”

Chicoré and Diabolo burst into laughter.

“What’s so funny?” asked Indiana, offended by their mockery.

“Let them be, they’re idiots,” replied Charles, while Triphon Héricard launched into pseudo-scientific explanations.

“Milk is full of calcium, but, as Mr. Pasteur said, wine strengthens and is more hygienic.”

What had gotten into them all? Could they be more stereotypically French? Indy was in a cave with

poop in his hair from three different rats and this was hardly the time to start discussing cuisine? They didn't have the vial.

"That's enough!" exclaimed Indiana. "We've wasted enough time. Now, we need to deal with the vial and nothing else!"

Drawing in his stomach, Héricard had taken a few generous pulls from the canteen but did his best to stand at attention. He swayed. It was late. He tried to sound commanding.

"You're right, young man, we need to hurry to retrieve this precious vial. By now, our two birds may have flown the nest."

The "nest," as Triphon Héricard called it, was the office located at the entrance to the quarries, where de Bury had received them on their first visit. Charles knew the underground passages perfectly; this would save them considerable time. Only one problem could stop them: locked doors. But Héricard had a large master key that opened all locks. Unfortunately, the man did not have the physical condition of the boys.

Sweating, panting, grumbling, he lagged behind. If there was a hole, he found a way to twist his ankle. During the ascent of the stairs, they had to wait for him regularly. In short, because of him, instead of a quarter of an hour, they took almost half an hour to arrive.

Stealthily the group entered the calm and dark underground hall. Only one lamp illuminated de Bury's, alias Artüg's, desk. In front of the gate that opened onto the coal-gray of early morning a car

was parked, ready to leave. Around it, the man with the now-dirty yellow shoes was bustling about.

“They’re getting ready to leave,” murmured Héricard. “We absolutely must stop them.”

“We’ll surround them quietly and take them by surprise,” proposed Indiana. “Are you armed, Inspector?”

“Of course, young man,” replied Héricard, proudly displaying a tiny pistol.

Did he know how to use it? Indiana almost asked him, but refrained for fear that he’d make him angry at the wrong people.

“Are you sure we’re not risking anything?” whispered Chicoré, worried. “They have two big guns and they’re capable of shooting.”

“You forget that I have my whip,” retorted Indiana proudly. “When you know how to use it, it will change the equation. Be ready to grab any loose guns.”

“And besides,” continued Héricard, “we outnumber them. Not to mention the advantage of surprise.”

As the boys began to spread out around the vehicle, Artüg emerged from the office. “Have you checked everything: the oil level, the gas in the tank, the spark plugs for ignition?” he asked his accomplice, in an authoritative tone.

“Yes boss, everything. There’s no problem.”

“Good, you just have to start the engine. We’re leaving these cursed underground tunnels and heading to Germany where the radioactive ampoule is eagerly awaited.”

Obedying his superior without a word, Kronstadt grabbed the crank, inserted it into the front of the engine, and turned it. On the first turn, the engine started. Artüg, who had settled behind the wheel, smiled satisfactorily. It was a new vehicle. He accelerated two, three times to warm up the engine. It rumbled deep and smooth.

Each had now reached a strategic position around the car. Indiana judged that the time had come to act.

“Forward!” he shouted, rushing towards the car, while his companions emerged from the shadows.

“Don’t move,” he said to the two criminals. “Surrender, you have no chance!” added Héricard. Then, everything happened quickly. Artüg stepped on the accelerator: the wheels screeched and the car took off. Kronstadt, who was still in front, just had time to dive to the side to avoid being completely crushed. His foot had been crushed. Rolling around on the ground trying to reach his foot, the man with the yellow shoes shrieked in pain.. Chicoré and Diabolo securely tied his wrists to a steel bar. For him, the adventure was over.

Meanwhile, Artüg was driving towards the exit. He was driving with one hand and with the other, brandishing his pistol out of the open window. He fired several shots, but the bullets missed and ricocheted off nearby stonework. Standing with his legs apart, Héricard aimed his gun towards the car. With one eye closed and his tongue sticking out, he took careful aim at the tires.

“Shoot, Inspector!” shouted Indiana. “He’s going to escape!”

Finally, Héricard decided to pull the trigger. But no shot was fired. There was just a small metallic click. Bewildered, Héricard slapped his forehead.

“What bad luck,” he grumbled. “I forgot to reload my gun.”

Unbelievable! Unthinkable! Inconceivable! This Triphon Héricard was closer to the character he played under cover than Indy could believe. Because of him, would Artüg succeed in escaping with the vial without being stopped?

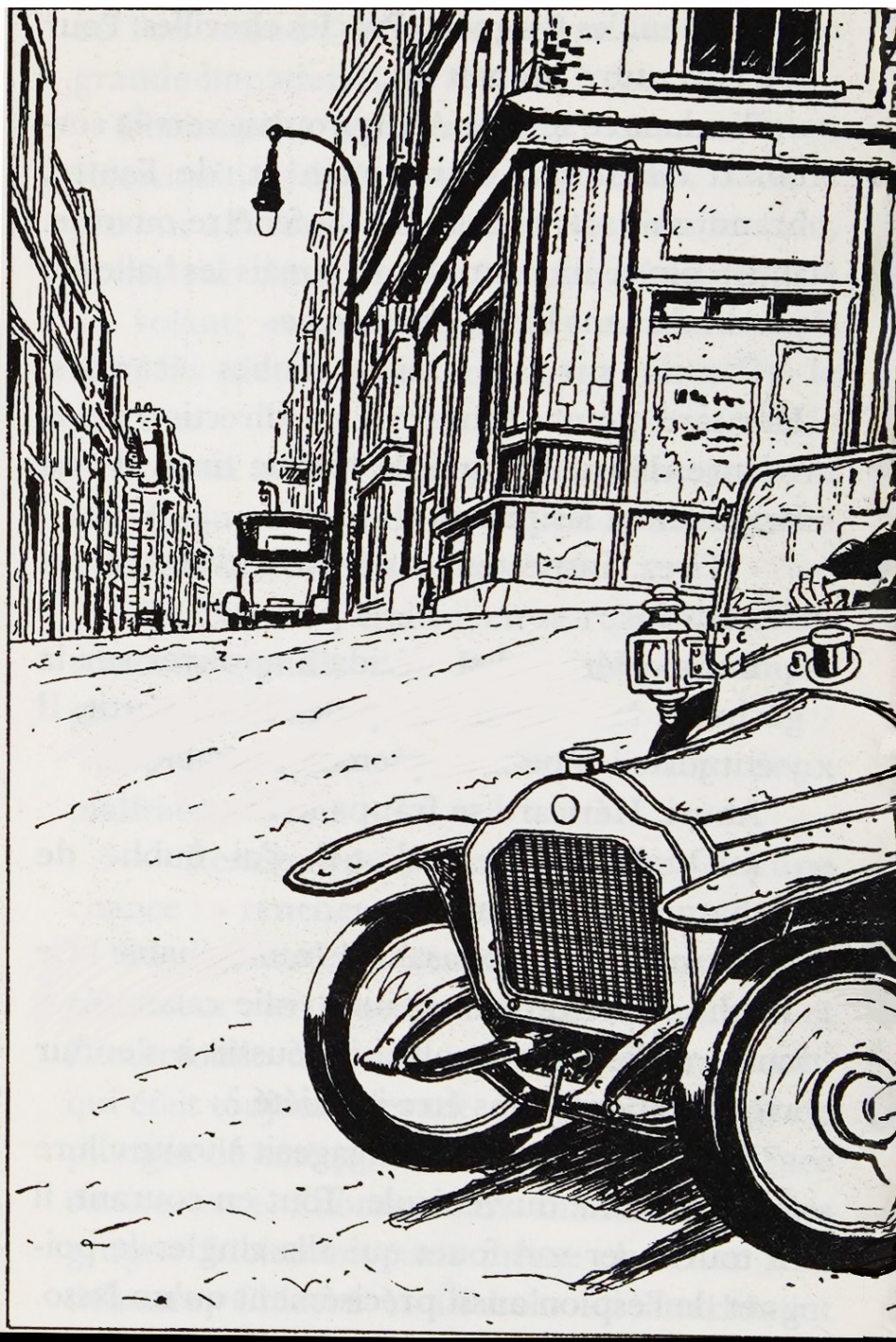
No! Already, Indiana was running after the vehicle. While running, he twirled his whip ahead of himself, which snapped at the spy’s wrist making the next shot go wild. With a cry of pain, Artüg couldn’t hold onto his weapon and it fell onto the road.

Reflexively from the pain Artüg had sharply turned the steering wheel to the right. One of his wheels hit the curb, and the car came to a momentary stop. Indiana seized the opportunity to jump onto the rear bumper. Charles, who was close behind, shouted, “Be careful, Indy. This scoundrel is capable of anything.”

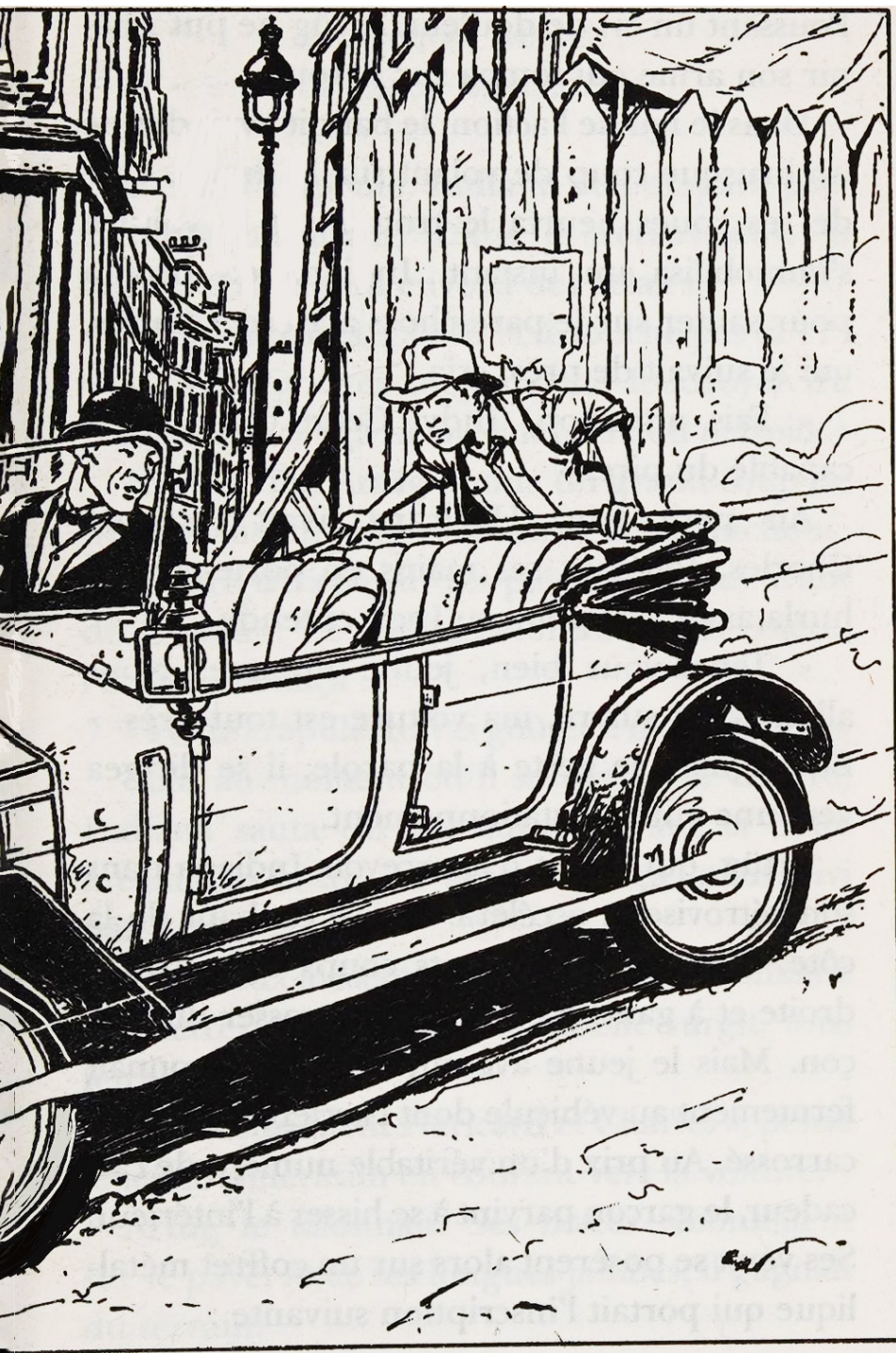
At what was a brisk trot for him, Héricard caught up with Charles. Cupping his hands around his mouth, he shouted loud enough for Indy to hear, “Hold on tight, young man. We’ll follow you; my car is nearby.” And, true to his word, he headed towards a parked car.

Artüg, who had just seen Indiana in his









rearview mirror, accelerated. When he reached the top of the hill, he sharply swerved the steering wheel left and right to shake off the boy. But the young adventurer held onto the vehicle firmly, whose rear was not covered. With a real stunt performance, the boy managed to hoist himself inside. His eyes then fell on a metal box bearing the following inscription:

WARNING, DANGER: RADIOACTIVE  
SUBSTANCE.

It was the vial. Indiana took it cautiously.

In the rearview mirror, Artüg's gaze shot daggers at him.

“Keep your hands off, kid! Don't touch that!”

“You can glare at me all you want, Colonel, it doesn't faze me one bit.”

Enraged, Artüg slammed on the brakes. With a long screech of rubber, the car skidded on the wet cobblestones before coming to a stop. His face distorted with anger, the spy threatened, “You little brat, you're going to taste my fists!” But as he was getting out of the car, Indiana jumped from the vehicle. Clutching the metal box tightly to his chest, he dashed off, pursued by Artüg. Both had covered about fifty meters when a car appeared, all lights on.

“That must be Héricard and Charles,” thought the young American as he ran towards the car. Artüg was close behind him. His boots echoed on the pavement. With his long legs, he was gaining ground. Luckily, the car was getting closer. Just ten meters left before it reached Indiana. The boy tried to run

even faster. He could almost feel the spy's breath on his back. Just five meters.

Just as Artüg was about to grab him, Indiana recognized Héricard at the wheel and Charles beside him. Phew! He was saved!

"It's your turn, Colonel! This time, you've lost. The radium will never serve your German friends," Indiana gasped as he spoke.

"Grrr!" growled Artüg, clenching his jaw and fists. "If I catch you, you nosy little brat, I'll crush you!"

"Try it!" threatened Triphon Héricard, who had just joined Indy, gun in hand. "If you come any closer, I'll shoot! This time, my gun is loaded."

To prove that he was telling the truth, the man waved his pistol like a rattle. So much so that a bullet accidentally went off.

"What a clumsy fool!" The stray bullet whizzed past Indiana's ears.

"Hey, Inspector, you're aiming at the wrong target! You almost turned my hat into a sieve!" Confused, Héricard looked at his gun. It was as if he blamed it for his clumsiness. Anger flushed his cheeks.

"Surrender, you villainous scoundrel!"

"Never!" hissed Artüg. "I'd rather die!"

With his head lowered, he rushed back to his car, still running.

"Come on, quick!" Héricard ordered Charles and Indiana. "We'll chase after him."

The two boys exchanged glances. They winked at each other, and Indiana replied, "Excuse

us, Inspector, but for tonight, that's all. Our mission is over. We want to sleep."

Indiana solemnly placed the box on the seat next to Héricard. "We entrust the vial to you, Inspector."

"Thank you, young men. I'll take care of it. Tomorrow, it will be in a safe, secure place," replied the man, revving his engine.

Already, only the taillights of Artüg's car could be seen disappearing into the night.

"Excuse me, but if I don't want this scoundrel to escape, I have to go before he gets too far."

He shifted the gearbox into first gear and started the car. Quickly, the red lights of his car disappeared around a corner.

"If he drives as badly as he knows how to use a pistol, Artüg stands every chance of escaping," noted Charles, a mocking smile on his lips.

"Let him manage; it's no longer our concern!" exclaimed Indiana, yawning widely. "We still need to find a way to get back to the hotel before my father wakes up."

What became of the spy? No one ever knew. In the newspapers the next day, one could read this article:

"Chased by the intrepid Inspector Triphon Héricard, Colonel Artüg of the German Secret Service, who had stolen the radioactive ampoule from the Marie Curie Institute and was posing as a quarry engineer, was involved in a driving mishap. At the Pont au Change, he lost control of the car he was trying to flee in. It crashed through the railing

and plunged into the Seine. Rescued by firefighters, the vehicle was empty.

Fortunately, the courageous Inspector Triphon Héricard had already retrieved the ampoule. Honored for his exploit, he was decorated by the President of the French Republic.

There was no need to search for a word about Charles and Indiana; Héricard had already forgotten about them.”

## Epilogue

The sky was beginning to turn pink on the horizon as they boarded one of the first morning buses. Covered in mud from head to toe, their hands and faces as if they had spent the night in a coal mine, it was hard for them to go unnoticed among the stylish office workers heading in for early shifts.

Arriving at the hotel, they entered through a service door to avoid attracting attention.

“Leave me your clothes. I’ll take them to the hotel laundry and return them to you good as new.” said Charles.

“Thank you for everything,” said Indiana, giving his friend a friendly pat on the back.

“It’s true! We make a great team. Unfortunately, you’ll be returning to the United States,” replied Charles with a hint of sadness in his voice.

“But we can write to each other. And meet again. I travel very often. Let me know if you ever move home.”

They shook hands and parted ways. Wearing the waiter’s clothes that Charles had lent him, Indy returned to his room. In the next room, Professor Jones was still sleeping. Wine made his snores capable of piercing through a wall.

Without even taking the time to undress, the young American slipped under the covers and fell asleep immediately. Like a log.

Three hours later, his father woke him up with a flourish oppositional to how every bone in Indy;s



body was feeling.

“Get up, lazybones! It’s our last day in Paris. We must make the most of it!”

Indy opened his eyelids halfway. They were heavy. Far too heavy. The bright light hurt his tired pupils. Grunting, he buried his head under the thick feather pillow.

“Junior!!! It’s 10:30,” insisted the professor, shaking the bed.

“Leave me alone,” groaned Indy in a hoarse voice.

Surprised and worried at the same time, Henry Jones leaned over his son. Pulling the sheet slightly, he uncovered the boy’s blond curls and, as he used to do when his son was still a child, whispered in his ear:

“Junior, I have a surprise for you.”

A surprise! What surprise? Indiana always distrusted the surprises that Professor Jones had in store for him. Most of the time, they were more like chores than fun activities. In a gentle voice, the professor continued. “I’m sure my idea will please you. Today, I’ve decided to visit the catacombs.”

Like a puppet pulled by a spring, Indiana burst into uncontrollable laughter. Between two gasps, he managed to say:

“Dad, if you don’t mind, I’d really prefer to go to the library or the museum.”

“What?!” exclaimed the professor. “But you hate libraries and museums! What’s gotten into you again?”

With his legs giving out, he collapsed into



a chair. He would never understand this son who changed his mind like he changed his shirt. Luckily Professor Jones's most recent reading inspired plans to connect his son with an old friend up north.

## Translator's Notes:

Thank you to Richard Beugné for the story and Erik Juszezak for the illustrations. My goal is to share their work with others who have been unable to read it before. Even the history of translating the title of this book was interesting to me, I made it a little like the American pulp titles that inspired much of Indiana Jones. "The Radioactive Bulb" in English sounds like something from *The Tick*.

I am a college professor who went to Indiana University. While my life is in no way as exciting as Dr. Jones, I have always loved the character and when I learned of the untranslated French novels from 1997 I saw it as a fun opportunity.

I see fictional worlds, such as the one Indiana Jones inhabits, as five-dimensional spaces. Mixtures of probability and choice. The probability of seeing something from our world in Indiana Jones is high, the probability of seeing things from our world in *Star Wars* is low. As a viewer you go in knowing the protagonist will make heroic choices.

Part of my research involves quantification of media, I give talks at places like San Diego Comic Con about my research. For example I did a study about historical attitudes towards head injury by counting how many times Batman & Robin are knocked unconscious in the first five years of the comics.

When I read something I tend to read everything. If I wanted to read this story I was going to

have to translate it, and if I was going to do that I wanted to share the work. As reading this was part of a wider effort I aligned the translation with Indiana Jones lore. It was a way of me reconciling how these stories fit together. To put it succinctly, if you take this book literally Indiana Jones' dog is dead, in the next French-only book (*The Sacred Meteorite*) the dog is alive again.

My undergraduate is in Mathematics. It is the foundation of my work. In comparison to Star Wars lore, Indiana Jones lore is microscopic. It all surrounds one man in his roughly 100 year long life. Star Wars lore spans millennia across an entire universe full of thousands of planets and billions of people. Star Wars lore is so large it has had to effectively restart multiple times after collapsing under its own weight. Even the stormtrooper who finds the circular droid part on Tatooine in the first film, Davin Felth, has such an extensive backstory that parts of it do not work with other parts. He had one line in one movie! He is the "Look sir, droids!" guy.

The world of Indiana Jones is completely different from Star Wars. That is reflected in this translation. People familiar with Dr. Jones history know there are small errors in the historical record. One of the most common is the death of his dog-namesake, Indiana. Some of the novels seem to imply the dog has died. However the television series implies the dog is still alive after the *Young Indiana Jones* novels.

The story felt like it was asking for these clarifications to Indiana Jones canon. For example in this book Henry Jones sr. Calls the dog « pauvre-

chien-pour-te-saver-la-vie » which absolutely could be interpreted as meaning the dog has died. He does this while mocking his son's nickname.

What kind of father would tease his son about his lifelong dog dying? A kid who lost his mother just months before? A kid who survived the Titanic disaster after that? That is unbelievably cruel in my mind. I know parents were different then, but I still see that as beyond. If you look at the context, his father is teasing Indiana for not liking his lunch. Then teases him about the nickname. That is why I changed it to reflect that Indiana Jones thought his dog was dead before departing for Turkey in *Young Indiana Jones and the Secret City*. It turns out the dog had run off to recuperate. It makes more sense to me that his dad is teasing Indiana about him thinking the dog died, implying Indiana was overdramatic. The father was teasing in the two things he said beforehand. Even worse, **in the next book** (*Indiana Jones Jr et la Météorite Sacrée*) Indiana temporarily adopts another Husky and speaks about his dog Indiana as if the dog is alive.

I also added what I felt was important context of what happens just before this story. The story *Young Indiana Jones and the Lost Gold of Durango* is set not long before this one and is the previous story in the timeline. In that story Indiana Jones is tied up with his friend and left to watch vultures eat his recently deceased horse. In this story he is forced to eat tripe.

Another confusion in the wider Indiana Jones historical record surrounds the death of his mother.

A funeral card is found in the Journal of Indiana Jones stating the death was on May 3rd. Some other places state it was in May, but no specific accounts of the death appear in any Indiana Jones media I know of. I addressed this by explaining Henry Jones Sr. did not run the death announcement until May out of grief. According to the wider story he quits everything and moves to Utah when she dies, him forgetting to or being unable to run the death announcement is reasonable. I wish I did not personally know of a professor who did not run his wife's death announcement out of grief, but I do.

*Young Indiana Jones and the Titanic Adventure* is set between the two potential death dates. The book only says that his mother was alive when the spring break trip was booked. March 3rd meant she died just before the spring break trip to Oxford. This trip would have been arranged by international mail between Oxford and New York, it would have been done far in advance. While the Titanic book does not say she is dead it also does not definitively say she is alive. He does not think of or mention his mom as he begins his trip home and at the end of the book after surviving the disaster Indiana does not mention his parents. In his journal Indiana states he does not want to talk about his mother or her death. In the original text of the Radioactive Vial book and the next in the series her name is never mentioned.

At the time of this writing the Internet was in a very formative stage. The original author would have had to put work in to know the most popular silent comedy of 1913. The Henry Jones sr. criticiz-

ing the Eiffel Tower felt like it needed a mention of Guy de Maupassant. I also added historical context in places it seemed appropriate. Apologies to the subtle reference to one of my favorite Bill Murray Saturday Night Live skits ever and a vague allusion to a Pixar film. Belloq's home castle is from the book and movie Malevil, so I thought it was ok.

All characters and story within are property of Disney/ Lucasarts and I encourage you to purchase their fine products. The Indiana Jones rides at Disneyland and Tokyo DisneySea are worth the price of admission.

### **Disclaimer:**

This translation was created as part of an academic effort for multiple academic purposes relevant to my job:

- To visualize a historically significant alternate history of the United States.
- To serve as a classroom example for desktop publishing and translation.
- To serve as a text-based example of fifth dimensional design in my Experience Design courses.
- To gain knowledge of the book translation process using current tools.

# Young Indiana Jones and The Lost Vial of Dr. Curie

Story and original French text:

Richard Beugné

Illustration: Erik Juszezak

English Translation and Jones Lore:

Dr. Edd Schneider



A Parisian amateur Archaeologist  
leads Indiana Jones and his father  
to his discovery in the Paris  
catacombs. Suspected ancient  
Devil Worship! A found message  
leads Indy to a missing vial of  
stolen Radium from the Curie  
Institute!



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